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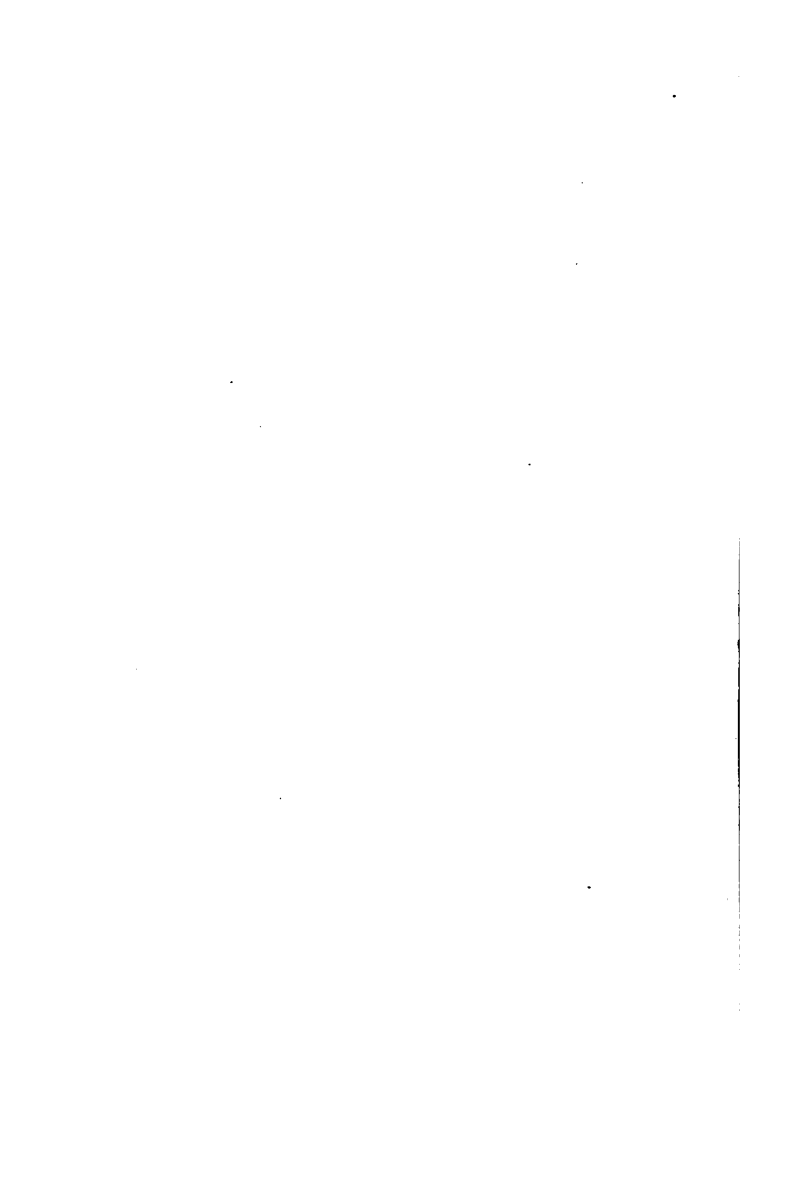
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The
Children
of the
Old Testament



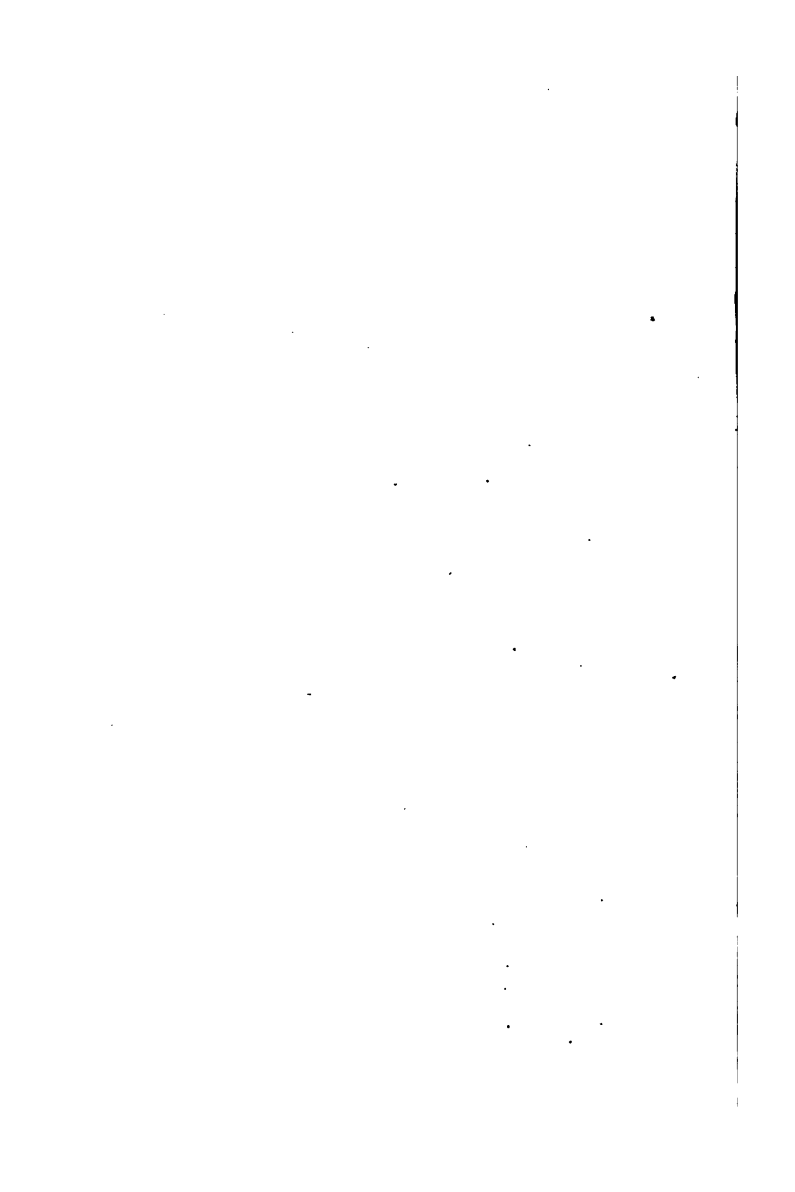
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THE CHILDREN
OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT.







**"SHALL I GO, AND FETCH A HEBREW WOMAN, THAT SHE MAY
NURSE THE CHILD?"** (See p. 8.)

1. 2. 3. }



THE CHILDREN
OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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EFFECTS;" "ECCLESIASTES;" "FAMILY PRAYERS;"
ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

PERHAPS some apology is needed for bringing out another work on a subject, upon which so many other books have already been written. The present Work was undertaken from a growing desire to have something of a very simple nature to set before children—and something, at the same time, that would arrest their attention, and interest their minds, without departing from the gravity of Scripture truth, or the solemnity of Scripture narrative. If the Reader should consider that this has been already done, and that the present Work was therefore uncalled for, the Author

has only to throw himself upon the Reader's kind forbearance, and, after all, to hope that the book may not have been written quite in vain.

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THE
CHILDREN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

MOSES.

THERE was a wicked King in Egypt, whose name was *Pharaoh*. He feared not God, and hated His people Israel. He would have liked to kill them all, if he could—but he ordered all the infants that were born, if they were *boys*, to be thrown into the river *Nile*, and drowned. I suppose Pharaoh sent men round to all the houses of the Hebrews, to see if there were any male infants there, and whenever they found any, they took them away, and threw them into the river, where they were either drowned, or eaten by the *crocodiles*. A crocodile is an animal that lives in the water, and is very fond of eating men and women.

And so, many of the poor infants were taken and thrown into the river. How sad it must

have been when their mothers heard the sound of the men's feet, coming to take their babies from them! How they must have cried, to have to part with them! And what must their *brothers* and *sisters* have said! How sorry they must have been!

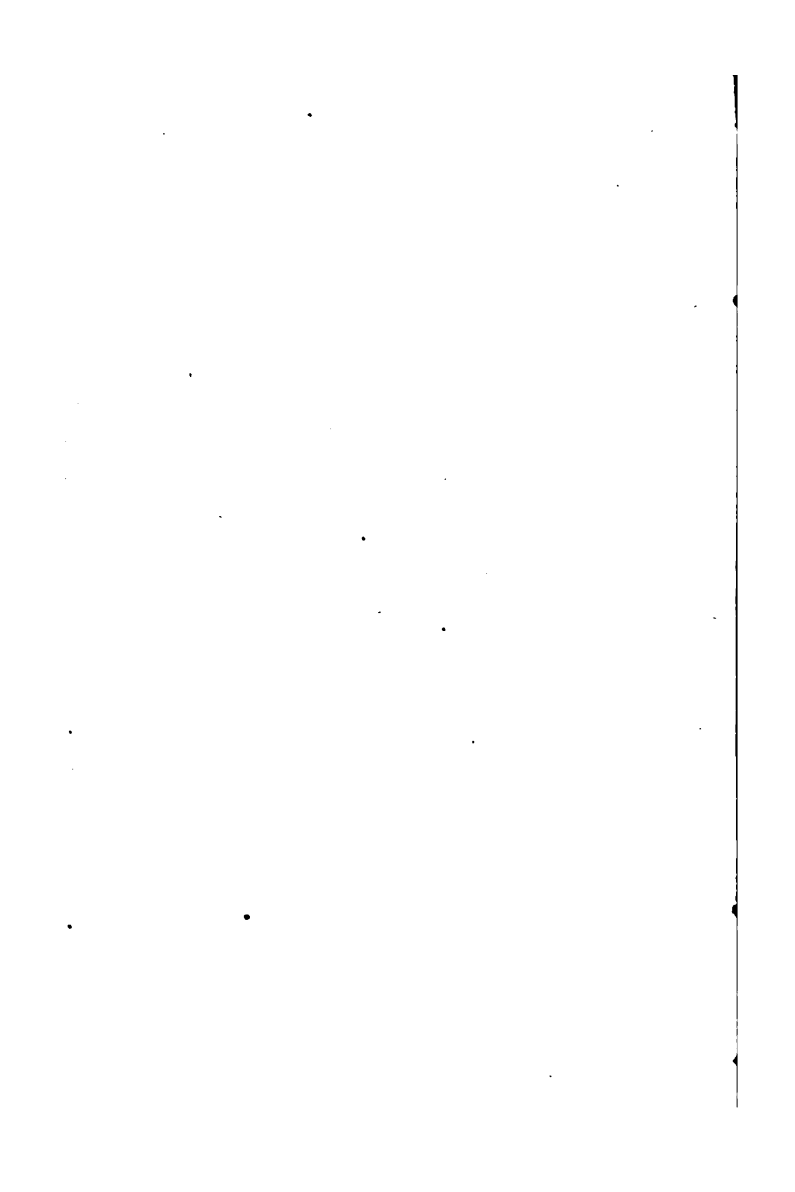
The poor infants did not know what they were going to do to them. Once *you* were a baby, and you don't remember it. You don't remember when you used to cry, and when your mother, or your nurse, carried you in her arms. How kind they were to you, and you did not know it! What care they took of you, and you did not see it!

God took care of you, when you were a baby. He sent you food, and clothing, and you did not know it. Many babies are taken sick and die. Some fall down, and are killed. Some are *burnt to death*. But *you* are still alive. How good *God* is to you! I hope you thank *God* for His goodness, and *believe in His dear Son Jesus Christ*, that your soul may be saved.

Now, there was a Hebrew woman, whose name was *Jochebed*. Her husband's name was *Amram*. (Num. xxvi. 59.) They had a baby born unto them. He was a very lovely

infant, and everybody, that saw him, said what a sweet babe he was. His mother said, "How can I part with my dear child? Can I give him up to be drowned?" So she thought what she could do to save his life. She must have prayed to God to teach her what to do, that her poor baby might not be drowned. For three months she hid him, and the men did not know that there was a baby in the house. But at last she could not hide him any longer. I dare say some one had told the men that there was a baby there, and she heard that they would come and look for him. So she said, "I will make an *ark of bulrushes*, and I will put my baby into the ark. It will float upon the water, and the child will not be drowned. If he die of hunger, it will be better than that the men should throw him into the river. It may be that God will save the life of my child."

So she took *bulrushes*, with their long narrow leaves, and she plaited them together, and made a small *ark* or cradle. Then she made a lid to cover it, and daubed it all over with slime and pitch, that the water might not get in and drown the child, but that the ark might swim like a little boat. Then I dare say she took



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She thought,
 and tell the men
 be drowned!"

something soft, and made a little *bed* for the baby to lie on, and a little *pillow* for its head. Then perhaps she kissed her dear baby, and put him inside the ark. Perhaps he was *asleep* all the time. Dear child, he did not know what they were doing to him! Or perhaps he was awake, and thought it was all play, and laughed and smiled, when they put him into the ark. When *you* were young, you had a *cradle*, but you never had such a cradle as *that*! You slept soundly in your bed. You were never put into an ark, to float upon the water. When you see your little brother, or sister, lying in their cradle, think of the infant *Moses* in the *ark of bulrushes*!

So when they had put the infant into the ark, and kissed him, and looked at him again and again, they put the lid on the ark, and the poor baby was covered in. And then they put the ark upon the river. They did not put it into the stream, where it would have floated away; but they placed it among the flags or bulrushes, where it was half hid by the leaves. I daresay they thought, if the men did not find the ark, that they might come, and see the poor infant, and give him food, and that so he might be kept alive.

So when they had put the ark into the river, the poor mother went home, to weep, and to pray, and to *think of her baby*. I think she *trusted in God*, and said, "God can preserve the life of my child." But his sister did not go home with her mother. Do you know the name of his sister? Her name was *Miriam*. Now, *Miriam* sat down on the ground, or else she hid herself among some bushes, to see if anybody should find the ark—to know what would become of her little brother. It must have been very early in the morning, before it was quite daylight, that they put the child into the ark, that nobody might see what they were doing. But soon after the sun rose *Miriam* heard the voices of people speaking. How her heart must have beat to think whether they were the men coming to look for the child! I daresay she was almost afraid to look. But it was not the men—it was *Pharaoh's daughter*. She was coming to bathe in the river, and her maidens with her. *Miriam* must have said, "I hope they will not go near the ark!" But they went to that very place! How much she must have been afraid! She thought, "What if they should find it, and tell the men to come and take the infant to be drowned!"

But look, Pharaoh's daughter has *seen the ark* among the flags! "*What is that?*" she said. "What is that neat *little ark of bulrushes*, so carefully daubed with slime and pitch? I wonder what is in it. What can it be?" So she sent one of her maids to fetch it. How curious they must have been to see what was in it! So they took the lid off the ark—and there they found the child! Who would have thought of finding a *baby* there! They must have called all the other maidens, and said, "Come quickly, and *see what we have got here*—a baby in an ark of bulrushes!" How they must have looked at the baby! How they all longed to take it in their arms, and nurse it! Don't you think that Miriam must have said, "What will they do to him? What will become of the babe?"

When they opened the ark, *the babe cried*. Perhaps he had been *asleep* till then—but then he awoke and *cried*. He cried for his *mother*—he cried for his *sister*! He heard voices, that he did not know. He saw faces, that he had never seen before. The poor babe did not know where he was—perhaps he was *hungry* too—and so he *cried*. . . . How pretty it is to see a baby when its father, or mother comes

into the room—or when its brother, or sister comes to play with it! How it smiles, and moves its little hands about, and throws back its head, and tries to speak! It almost leaps out of the nurse's arms! But when a stranger comes in, how *shy* it is! How it clings to the person that holds it—and often it will cry.

No wonder that the babe wept. How often infants cry! They feel pain, but they cannot tell anybody—they are hungry and tired, but they cannot speak—they can only *cry*. We ought to be very tender to babies when they cry. *You* were once a baby. You don't remember how you used to *cry* then—but your mother remembers it. How kind she was to you! What care she took of you! She loved you then; she loves you now—should you not love *her* very much? Should you not be very kind to her? Yes, and *God* heard you when you *wept*. Has not *God* been very good to you? Ought you not to love *God*? But you cannot love *God*, unless you have a *new heart*. Your own heart is so wicked, that it does not *wish* to love Him. You must ask *God* to give you a new mind, and *then* you will be able to love Him, and to *believe in His Son Jesus Christ*.

So they took the babe out of the ark. Pharaoh's daughter said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children. Its mother has put it into the ark, for fear the men should find it. I will take care of it. It shall not be killed! What a sweet babe it is! I should like to have it for my own. I shall call him my own son."

When Miriam saw how kind they were to the child, she came near, and heard what they said about it. So she said, "Shall I go and fetch a Hebrew woman, that she may nurse the child?" And Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." So she ran home as fast as she could. I dare say she was quite out of breath with running. Perhaps her mother said, "Why do you run so fast? What is the matter?" "Oh," she said, "*they have found the babe!* Pharaoh's daughter has found him, and she is *so kind* to him. She seems to love him as much as we do. She says they shall not kill him. She wants some one to nurse him; and if you come quickly, you will have him to keep, and we shall have our dear baby back again! Come, my mother! *come quickly!*"

Should you not have liked to see *Jochebed*, the child's mother, when she heard this good news? I think she lifted up her heart to God,

and thanked Him for his mercy. Perhaps she said, "*I trusted in God*, and He has taken care of my child!" She must have wept for joy. And so she went quickly, and came to the river. There she saw her own dear babe once more—not lying in the ark of bulrushes, but Pharaoh's daughter and her maidens nursing and fondling him.

So Pharaoh's daughter said, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." She did not know that it was the babe's own mother. Perhaps she said, "Keep this child in your house, till he is able to speak, and to run about, and when he is old enough, he shall come and live with me, and he shall be my son. If the men come to find the babe, and to take him, say that he belongs to Pharaoh's daughter, and then they will not touch him."

So Pharaoh's daughter, and her maidens, went up from the river, and Jochebed took her babe to her own home. What a joyful day it must have been to them all! They must have said, "How happy we are to have our own babe again!" The babe had a little brother—his name was *Aaron*. Don't you think that *he* was glad to see the

babe again? I daresay he came and took him by the feet, as he sat on his mother's lap—and when the babe was put into its own cradle once more to sleep, he went and peeped in, and was so glad to see him there again. And when his father, Amram, came home, how he must have run to tell him: "We, have got our babe again! He is here—he is here *in his own cradle!* Come, my father, come and see!"

Do you say, "What was the name of this dear child?" We don't know what his father and mother called him. The Bible does not tell us—so that *we* have not yet called him by any name. But when Pharaoh's daughter took him out of the ark—or else when his mother brought him to live with Pharaoh's daughter, she called his name *Moses*, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water." So now we may call him by his name, "*Moses*." The name of Moses, then, means one that has been *drawn out*, and saved. We shall hear more of that by and by.

We don't know how long Moses remained at home with his mother. The Bible does not say what they did with him—what he had to play with—or whether he ran about, and played, as other children do—but I daresay he

did. We may be quite sure that his mother took great pains to teach him what was right, and to tell him about the Lord God in heaven. She knew that Moses was going to live with Pharaoh's daughter, and that *she* could not teach him the fear of the Lord.

The Egyptians were *heathens*. They did not worship the true God. They bowed down to *cows* and *calves*, and worshipped them. How sad to think that men could be so ignorant! But there are many poor heathens, that do so *still*. They bow down to images of wood and stone, and know not God, and *Jesus Christ* whom He hath sent. Should we not *pray* very much that God would teach the poor heathen to know better? And should we not help to send out Missionaries, to tell them what they must do to be saved?

Jochebed could not tell Moses about *Jesus Christ*, for Jesus had not yet come into the world. It was more than a thousand years before Jesus Christ was born. But she could tell him that he was a *sinner*, and that he must have *his sins forgiven*, or he could not go to heaven. She could tell him that God had promised to send a Saviour to save sinners, and that he must put all his trust in the grace of

God. She told him that, when 'he did wrong, he must be sorry for it, and go and pray God to forgive him, and to teach him to be good.

My dear child, how thankful you ought to be. Your mother can tell you more than Moses's mother could tell him. She can tell you that *Jesus Christ is come long ago—that He died upon the cross to save sinners—that He is now in heaven, ready to save you, if you believe in Him—and to give you a new heart, if you pray Him to do so. Oh what good news this is!* Moses never heard this, when he was a child. Are you not better off than he?

We are not told how old Moses was, when he went to live with Pharaoh's daughter, but most likely he was still very young, and perhaps God had given him a new heart before that time. God can change the hearts of *children*, as well as the hearts of men and women. Children are never too young to receive the grace of God. He can put *His Holy Spirit* into their hearts, and then they are new creatures. I once knew of a little child that died only two years old, and she used to ask her father and mother to pray with her—and she loved so much to speak of Jesus, that they believed God had changed her heart.

When Jesus was on the earth, He used to

take infants in His arms, and bless them. And He said, "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me*, and forbid them not." And so we may still ask Him to give His holy Spirit to little children, and to teach them to believe in His name.

When Moses went to live with Pharaoh's daughter, he lived in a *palace*. A palace is a very fine house, full of all sorts of fine things. He had servants to wait upon him, and do everything for him. He had many good things to eat and drink. I daresay he had all sorts of playthings, and they gave him everything that he asked for. When Pharaoh's daughter walked out, perhaps she led him by the hand, and when she drove out, he went with her in her carriage. I daresay many children said, "I should like to be Moses, to ride about in that fine carriage, and to have so many good things." And so, many children still envy other children, who have finer clothes, and more to eat and drink than themselves. But we ought not to envy others, but to bless God for what we have, and be thankful.

My dear child, when you see other children with finer playthings than you have—when you

see them go into great houses, or riding about in fine carriages, pray to God to keep you from envying them. If it were good for *you* to have these fine things, God would have given them to you. And besides this, to have fine clothes, and to ride in a carriage, does not make folks happy. Perhaps the children, that do so, are not so happy as *you*. Nothing makes folks really happy but to *believe in Jesus Christ*, and to have their *sins forgiven*. If you have *that* to make you happy, you are better off than if you had all the fine things in the world.

When Moses had all these things, do you think that he forgot his father and mother, and brothers and sisters? Do you think he would have been sorry to go and live with them again? Would he have said, "I should not like to leave all the good things that I have here, and go back to live with my father and mother"? I should hope not. But many children, when they have been out to spend the day, and have had fine games to play at, and more to eat and drink than they have at home, are very cross when they go home at night, and think it hard that they have not the same things there, that they had when they were visiting. But this is not right—it is very

sinful—and if you feel it, you must pray to God to forgive you. And before you go to bed, you must try and think better, that you may be happy when you awake in the morning.

But do you think that Moses forgot God, and all that his mother had taught him, when he went to live with Pharaoh's daughter? I hope not. I don't think he did. I think God's grace must have been in him then, and so he did not forget God. I think that he never forgot to *pray* to God. When he got up in the morning, perhaps he said, "I have no one here to speak to me about God, as my mother used to do; I must take care that I don't forget what she taught me. I shall see many fine things about me to-day; O God, may I love Thee more than everything else in the world." I daresay Moses, when he was still a child, used often to go into a room by himself to pray, that God would keep him from sin—that he might be kept from temptation—and that he might not worship false gods. Perhaps Pharaoh's daughter wished him to go with her to worship in the idol's temple—but he said, "No, I cannot worship any but the Lord God."

How much the father and mother of Moses

must have prayed for him, that God would keep him from sin, and from praying to false gods! When he left them to go, and live with Pharaoh's daughter, perhaps Moses said to them, "Oh, no! I never will forget the Lord my God. I never will pray to any God but Him." But still they must have prayed much for him. This is a wicked world, and children learn bad ways, and Amram and Jochebed must often have said, "I hope Moses does not forget God. Pharaoh's daughter may give him all the gold and silver that she has—but what good will that do him, if his soul is lost?" Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37.)

And so Moses' father and mother must have prayed much for him. And if his sister Miriam feared God, *she* prayed for him too. She could say, "I saw him taken out of the water—oh that God may save his soul!" What a blessing it is when children have parents, or brothers, and sisters, that *pray for them!* How much better this is than when they do nothing but spoil them! Children don't know how much or how often their parents pray for them—how

much they ask God to save their souls. Oh, how sorry they are when their children are naughty! How they pray to God to forgive them, and to give them a new heart! My dear child, ought you not to pray to God for yourself? Ought you not to be very good, and not to make your parents sad by doing what is wrong?

God heard the prayers that were made for Moses. God kept him from evil. When he came to be a man, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (Heb. xi. 24.) As long as he was a child, or only a very young man, they let him do as he pleased. But perhaps when he came to be older, they said to him, "Now you are a man. If you are to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, you must go with her to the idol's temple. You must worship her gods. You must do as the Egyptians do, and not as do the Hebrews."

But Moses may have said, "No—I cannot do this—I must worship the Lord my God; I will not go with you to the idol's temple."

They said, "Then you cannot be son to Pharaoh's daughter. Then you will not have

all the gold and silver, that she can give you. Then you cannot be a Prince in Egypt, as *Joseph* was. Will you give up all this? Will you still pray to your own God?"

"Yes," said Moses, "I will. *Your* gods cannot save my soul. What will *my* God say to me, if I turn away from Him. He can punish me, if I do wrong. He can save my soul, if I trust in Him—I will never leave the Lord my God."

What a mercy that Moses was kept by the Lord His God! What a mercy that he remembered what he was taught when he was a child! My dear child, may *you* never forget what you have been told about God, and His dear Son Jesus Christ. If you meet with bad companions, who wish you to do anything naughty, then say, "How can I be so wicked? God sees me. Shall I sin against Him? Shall I do what I have been told not to do?" May God keep you, and teach you, while you are a *child*—and if you grow up to be a *man*, may you be faithful to God, as Moses was.

I daresay you have read about Moses—how God spake to him out of the burning bush, and of all the wonders, that God did by him in the land of Egypt—how he led the children of

Israel through the Red Sea, and was with them in the wilderness forty years. But we will not speak of these things. I wished only to tell you what Moses did when he was a *child*—so now we will take leave of Moses.

But, first, I wish to say something of what the history of Moses may teach us.

Moses was saved from being drowned, in an *Ark*. We have read of *another* Ark. You know what ark I mean—don't you? The ark in which *Noah* was saved, with his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives. The ark, in which Moses was laid, was made of *bulrushes*. It was very small—just large enough to hold an infant. Noah's ark was made of *wood*, and it was very large indeed—large enough to hold all the beasts, and birds, that Noah took with him into the ark, and all the food that they had to eat, *all* the time that they were in the ark.

Moses was only *a few hours* in the ark of bulrushes. Noah was *almost a year* in his ark of wood. The ark of bulrushes swam *on the river Nile*. Noah's ark floated on the *waters of the great Flood*. The waters covered the tops of the highest hills, and Noah's ark went wherever the waters carried it.

away. If you *believe in Jesus*, then you are safe. "His Blood cleanseth from all sin." If you are washed in His blood, then you need not be afraid to die—you need not fear the Judgment-day—for Jesus says that, *if we believe in Him*, we shall never perish, but have eternal life.

My dear child, you don't know how soon you may die. If you would be safe, you must believe in Jesus *now*. You must hide yourself in Jesus *now*, as little Moses was hid in the ark of bulrushes. If he could have spoken, he might have said, "I shall not be drowned; I am safe in the ark." And if you *believe in Jesus*, you may say, "My soul is safe; it will not be lost; I have found an *ark* for my *soul*."

Oh, happy children, who believe in Jesus! Happy those children who are hid in the Ark! No child is happy who does not *believe in Jesus*—for then his soul is not safe. If he were to die, where would he go, if he does not *believe in Jesus*? Would he go to heaven? . . . Can he be happy, then, if he is not in the true *ark*, even in Jesus!

The ark of bulrushes would not have lasted always. It would have grown old at last, and the water would have got in—and then Moses

would have been drowned. But *Jesus Christ*, the true ark, lives *for ever and ever*. There is no end to His salvation. If you hide yourself in Jesus, you are safe for ever and ever.

My dear child, is it not a good thing to believe in Jesus? Is it not a happy thing to have Him for your Friend? You must ask Him to give you His grace. Do you *wish* to believe in Jesus? Do you *desire* to have your soul saved? Then He must give you *His Holy Spirit*, and put a new heart into you. He has said that He will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. I hope you do so, and say, "Lord Jesus, I want to be saved! Have mercy upon me, a poor sinner. Wash me and make me clean—and *give me thy Holy Spirit*, for thy name's sake."

Pharaoh's daughter took Moses out of the water—she called him her own son. If you believe in Jesus, the Son of God Himself takes you out of danger, and makes you a *child of God*. Is not this better than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? Should you like to be a little prince—to be one of the sons of Queen Victoria? You know that you can't be so—but if you believe in Jesus

that makes you *a child of God*—a child of *the King of kings*. Is not that far better? My dear child, I hope you are one of God's children.

Moses was only called the son of Pharaoh's daughter for a short time. When he came to be a man, he was not called so any more. Pharaoh's daughter cast him out—he was not her son any longer. But if Christ be your Friend, He will never cast you away. Then you shall be a child of God for ever and ever. When this world is over, then you shall always live with the King of kings. You shall be a King's son—the Lord's son—and never cease to be so—but be so for ever and ever. My dear child, as Moses was hid in the ark of bulrushes, so may you be hid *in the Lord Jesus Christ!*

THE CHILD SAMUEL.

Who has not heard of little *Samuel*? Who has not seen pictures of little Samuel on his knees, with his hands clasped in prayer? I think *you* must often have seen it. But do you know *who* little Samuel was? Do you know the names of his *Father* and *Mother*? His father's name was *Elkanah*, and his mother's name was *Hannah*. (1 Sam. i. 1.)

Hannah was very glad when Samuel was born. She had wished very much to have a child, and God granted her request. Only think what a deal of trouble children give their parents! And then they are often naughty, and make their parents sad. And *yet* they wish to have children born to them, because they hope that they will be *good* children. And so *Hannah* wished that she might have a *good child*.

When little Samuel was born, Hannah

thanked God with all her heart. It is well to thank God for all His benefits. But how often we forget to do so! When you are hungry, you wish for something to eat. When your clothes are worn out, you wish to have new ones. When you are tired, you wish to go to bed and sleep. *Who* gives you your food, and your clothes? *Who* gives you a bed to lie upon, and sends you sweet sleep? Is it not *God*? I hope you thank Him for all these things.

Before Samuel was born, Hannah had vowed that she would "lend" him to the Lord. This means that she would not keep him at home for her own pleasure, but that he should live in the house of the Lord, to serve Him, as long as he lived. Now, Hannah was as good as her word. She did what she had vowed. When little Samuel was weaned, and able to walk, she took him up to *Eli*, the High Priest, and begged him to keep the child, and to bring him up to serve in the house of the Lord.

Hannah did as she had promised. I hope *you* do so too. If you have promised to give away a plaything to one of your companions, or to let him have a part of any-

thing good that you have to eat, I hope *you keep your word*. I don't like to hear children say, "It is so good, I cannot part with it. I must keep it *all for myself*; you shall not have any of it." Do you think that God likes to hear you say so?

Hannah loved Samuel very much, and she must have been sorry to part with him. But God comforted her heart. God always comforts those, who love and serve Him. And little Samuel must have been very sorry to part with his mother. He had never seen Eli before; he was quite a stranger to him. Children don't like to be left with strangers; and I dare say little Samuel cried a good deal, when he saw his mother go away, and leave him behind. But Eli must have been very kind to the child, and said to him, "Did not your mother promise to come and *see you again*? Don't cry, my child; she will come some day, as she promised." And so, I dare say, Samuel was comforted.

Do *you* live at home with your mother, and your father too? Are you not glad? You would not like to be sent away from home, as little Samuel was. You ought to be a very

good child, when God has been so good to you. If you are with your mother every day, and all the day long, I hope you behave well and are thankful.

Some children have their mamma far away from them across the sea, in India, or in some other distant land. Is *your* mamma thus far away? Well, I hope you often think of her. I am sure *she* thinks of *you*. And when you are old enough, you will write to her, and be able to read the letters that she writes to *you*. And some day, *if God will*, your mamma will sail across the sea, to see you—or you will go to see *her*. Shall you not be glad? I hope you *pray* for her; and I hope she prays for *you*, that God may give you *a new heart*, and teach you to *believe in Jesus Christ*, that you may be saved.

How often do you think Hannah went to see her child Samuel? Only *once a year*! But then, I dare say, she staid some little time with him. And she used to make him *a little coat* every year, and took it up with her when she went to worship in the house of the Lord, and to see her child Samuel. Hannah must have been very glad to make the coat for her child. And I dare say your mother is very glad to

work for *you*. How much trouble mothers take for their children, in making their clothes and mending them, and in many other things! Don't you think that children ought to do a great deal for their mothers, when they are old enough to help them?

And what did little *Samuel* do with *Eli*? He had none of his brothers and sisters to play with. Do you think he found it very dull? I don't think he did, for *Eli* must have been very kind to him. I don't doubt he liked to teach *Samuel* to read, and to see him run and skip about—and that he often took him on his knee, and played with him—and often spoke to him about the Lord God, and the kingdom of heaven.

Oh no, I don't think little *Samuel* found it dull. It was the will of God that he should be there, and God was able to make him cheerful and happy, though he had no other children to play with. Besides, little *Samuel* was not idle, he had *plenty to do*—and that is one way of being happy. Idle people are never happy.

And *what* was it, then, that little *Samuel* had to do? We are told that "*Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.*" (Chap. ii. 18.) The priests wore

a linen coat or dress, called an "*ephod*"—and little Samuel was dressed in one of these. Think of a little child only three or four years old, dressed in his *ephod*, like one of the priests, and waiting upon Eli in the house of the Lord!

There was plenty for little Samuel to do. Early in the morning one of the priests used to go up to the roof of the Temple, or outside the Tabernacle, to watch for the sunrising—and directly the sun appeared, the morning sacrifice was offered up. A *lamb* was killed for a sacrifice, to show that *Jesus Christ* would come into the world, to save sinners. I dare say little Samuel would often go with the priest in the morning, to watch for the sunrise, and try if he could not see it first, and then run as fast as he could, and tell Eli that the sun was risen.

Every *Sabbath-day* they used to put *twelve loaves* of bread on the *table* in the house of the Lord. These loaves were called the *shew-bread*. They used to stand on the table all the week, and then, when the Sabbath came, they took them away, and brought fresh ones. I dare say little Samuel helped to do this also.

Perhaps he asked the priest to let him take the old loaves off the table, that he might put the fresh loaves on it. The loaves were for the priests to eat, when they were taken off the table. I daresay they gave little Samuel a piece, when he had carried them away.

And then they often wanted *water* for the sacrifices, and little Samuel would help to fetch it. He could not carry a large pitcher full, but I dare say he had a *small* one of his own; and if he filled it often, that would always be of use.

Little Samuel used to see all the *sacrifices* slain—the lambs, and the rams, and the oxen, and the goats. They were killed, and their blood was sprinkled on the altar. You would not have liked to see that! But in those days God said that it must be done, and He taught His servants to like what He told them to do.

There were many things that Samuel might do. Children are not so strong as men, but if they do as they are told, they may help men very much. Little Samuel would often hold things in his hands, till the priests were ready for them. He would hold the door open while anybody came in or went out. He would go

on errands, when they sent him, and run fast, that he might not keep them waiting. He would light the lamps, or snuff them, when they required it—and at night he would help to shut the doors of the house of God. There was so much to do, that I dare say little Samuel was often busy the whole day long.

Eli used often to go to pray in the Temple, and he would take little Samuel with him. Every day Samuel went with him into the house of the Lord, and Samuel, as a child, "*ministered before the Lord.*" What the priests did, Samuel did: for the Lord had taken him to be His servant.

"The child Samuel *grew* before the Lord." (ii. 21.) When he went first to live with Eli, he was little more than a baby. Perhaps he could not run very fast alone. But little Samuel grew bigger and bigger, and at last he came to be a big boy—and, all the while, he was in the house of the Lord. He lived with Eli. He was with him all day, and he slept not far from him at night.

Perhaps you say, "What a good child Samuel* must have been! He lived always in the house

of the Lord. He had good old Eli to teach him the fear of the Lord. Surely Samuel must have been a very good child!"

My child, I daresay Samuel was good. I dare say he was very gentle, and always did what Eli told him. I think all the priests must have loved Samuel, and said how good a child he was. But *Samuel was a sinner*. All children are sinners. All children require to have a *new heart*—and so did *Samuel*. Eli could give Samuel a great deal, but he could not give him a new heart. Samuel lived always in the Temple—but that did not give him a new heart—neither could it take his sins away. God alone can give a new heart. Nothing but the blood of Christ can take sin away.

And so, my dear child, *you* may have kind parents to teach you at home. You may go to the Sunday-school, and learn much out of the Bible, and say hymns. You may go to church every Sabbath; but all that will *not* give you a *new heart*. You may be gentle at home, and well behaved at school—but, my dear child, *have you a new heart?* Have you *God's Holy Spirit* in you? Are you *born again?* Oh, my child, ask God to teach you what this means. Say, "O God, I want to know it. I want to

have a new heart. I want to believe in Jesus Christ, that my soul may be saved ! ”

Had Samuel a new heart, when his mother took him up to live with Eli? No. Had he a new heart soon after he began to live in the house of the Lord? No. Do you say, “*How do you know that Samuel had not a new heart then?*” Because the Bible says so. And what does it say? It says, “Now Samuel *did not yet know the Lord.*” (1 Sam. iii. 7.)

Samuel did not yet “*know the Lord.*” What ! did not Samuel know that God made him, and gave him everything that he had? Did not he know that God made the sun, and the moon, and the stars—that He made the beasts, and the birds, and the trees, and the flowers? Oh yes, he knew *all this*.

Did not Samuel know that the house he lived in was God’s house—that Eli was the priest of God? Did he not know that the Bible was the Word of God? Did he not know that it was his duty to pray to God? Oh yes, he knew *all this*.

What, then, does it mean that “Samuel *did not yet know the Lord*”? To know the Lord—what does it mean? My dear child, I am

afraid I cannot make you understand this. God alone can teach you to feel it, and know it. You must be *born again*, and *then* you will know what it means. Oh, pray to God, that you may be *born again*!

But I will try and tell you a little of what it means to know the Lord; but I don't know that you will understand what I say. It means to *love God* as a *Friend*—to be very *glad* to *pray to God*—to be *very happy* when you *think of God*. It means that God should be more dear to you than all your friends, and all your play-things—that you should love God more than your meat and your drink, and everything else that you can have. Oh, it means a great deal more than I can tell you. May God teach you to know what it means!

And *how* are you to learn to know God? My dear child, you must feel that you are a great *sinner*. You must wish very much to *have your sins forgiven*. You must *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. You must ask Him to wash you in *His precious Blood*.

Does not *Jesus* say, "*I am the door.*" By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved?" (John x. 9.)

"*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*" (John xiv. 6.)

You must *go to Jesus*. You must say, "O Lord Jesus! I want to have my sins forgiven—I want to know God. Oh *give me Thy Holy Spirit*, that I may learn to know God, and that I may *believe on Thee* with all my heart!"

My dear child, may God Himself teach you. I cannot make you know God, neither can I give you a new heart.

Little Samuel "*did not yet know the Lord*;" but God knew little Samuel, and God was soon going to teach him, and to make him one of the Lord's prophets, to teach His people, and to declare His will. God was soon going to give Samuel a new heart, and to draw him by the teaching of His Holy Spirit. *How* the Lord God did this we shall soon see.

Little Samuel slept near Eli. When Samuel first went to live in the house of the Lord, I dare say Eli put Samuel to bed, because he was then too young to wait upon himself. But Samuel grew bigger, and Eli became very old, and his eyes began to grow dim, so that he could not see. *He* used

to lead little Samuel by the hand; but now he required Samuel to lead *him*. I dare say little Samuel was very useful to Eli, and always watched to see what he wanted him to do—and when bedtime came, he would help Eli to go to bed, as Eli used to help him.

Good children always like to be of use to their parents and friends, and particularly when they grow old, and cannot help themselves. How glad they are to go messages for them, and to do anything to save them trouble! I hope *you* like to do this.

And, my dear child, should we not be very good to the *blind*? How sad it is *not to see*! Would *you* like to be *blind*? Not to be able to see your father, or your mother! To hear the baby cry, or to hear your little brother running about at play—and *not to see them*! Poor blind men cannot see the moon or the stars. They cannot see the green fields, nor the pretty flowers. If you were to say to them, "See what a nice book I have got!" they could not see it. If you were to show them your play-things, they might put out their hands to feel them, but *they could not see them*! Should we not pity the blind! Should we not thank God that *we* can see!

But God has been pleased to do a great deal for the blind. There are many houses where they are taken care of, and taught to make baskets, and to do other kinds of work. They teach the blind even to *read* ! Do you say, “ *How* can that be ? They have *no eyes* ! ” ? And yet they learn to read, because they print books for them with *raised letters*, that they can feel—so that their *fingers* do instead of *eyes* !

It takes some time for a blind person to learn to read, but at last they learn to read very well. I have heard of a blind person reading to one who could see. The one, who had eyes to see with, was sick in bed, and the blind one read to her ! Yes, and I have often seen blind men *walking about the streets*, with no one to lead them. They had their sticks in their hands, and they felt all the way with their sticks. Their *sticks* were like *eyes* to them ! And I have heard of a *blind* man going to show the way to one who could see, *in the streets of London*, in a dark night ! So you see what God can teach the blind to do !

So *Eli* was *blind*, and Samuel waited upon him. They slept either in the house of the Lord, or in a room that touched it. Before

they went to bed, they always saw that the lamp was lighted in the holy place. It was God's will that it never should be dark in His house. The lamps were to burn there all night, and not to go out till the morning. This was to teach us that "*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*" (1 John i. 5)—that God covers Himself "*with light as with a garment.*" (Ps. civ. 2.) Light is beautiful, and darkness is ugly. In the light you can see—when it is dark, you cannot see. But *God sees all things*—God can *always* see. It is always light with God—and so God said that there should be light in His house by day, and by night—to show that He sees all men, and knows all things.

Now, one night very late, when it was past midnight—when daylight was coming again—the lamps were beginning to burn rather dim. They lasted all night, till morning came; and then they went out, or, perhaps, when little Samuel got up, he *put* them out. Now Samuel was lying on his bed. We don't know whether he was asleep, or lying awake—but Samuel heard a voice speak to him, and say, "Samuel." He said *at once*, "Here am I," and *then* he got up and went to Eli, for he thought that he had

called him, and said, "*Here am I, for thou calledst me.*"

This shows how attentive Samuel was to Eli, and how ready he was to hear him and to help him. He answered him *at once*; and then he did not lie still in bed, to hear what Eli wanted; but he got up, and *ran* to him, to know what he could do. This is a lesson to all children to be ready when they are called, and to go quickly when there is anything for them to do. I don't like to see children lazy and unwilling to run for anything, when they are told to do so. If you are lazy when you are *young*, what will you be when you are *older*! How much precious time you will lose! And others will be wiser and better than you.

Now Eli had not spoken to Samuel. So he told him to lie down again. So little Samuel thought that he must have been mistaken, and went and lay down. Perhaps he tried to go to sleep again; but presently he heard a voice again say, "*Samuel!*" Again he got up, and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for thou *didst* call me"—but Eli said, "*I called not, my son; lie down again.*"

It must have seemed very strange to Samuel. He had heard a voice speak. It was not Eli—*who could it be?* So he went and lay down again. And lo! *a third time* the voice came, and cried, "*Samuel!*" Now Samuel may have said to himself, "I cannot be mistaken *this time*—I have not been asleep—I have been listening all the time—Yes, it is a voice—it *must* be *Eli*—surely he will not say this time that he did not call me." So he got up and went to Eli, and said, "*Here I am*, for thou DIDST call me!"

Now Eli perceived that *some one* must have spoken to Samuel. He knew that there was no man in the room besides himself and Samuel. Eli knew that *God* sometimes spoke to the children of men. God spoke to the prophets. So Eli said to himself, "*It must be the Lord*, that spake to the child. God is going to make Samuel one of His prophets, and therefore He has come to speak to him."

I daresay Eli said to Samuel, "No, my child, *indeed* I did not call you—The *Lord God* must have spoken to you." Perhaps Samuel said, "I am but a *child*! *What* can the Lord have to say to *me*? Surely if the Lord had anything to say, He would have spoken to *thee*, and *not to me*!"

Then Eli may have said, "The Lord speaks

to whom He will, my son. He has not spoken to me; He has spoken to *thee*. The Lord must have somewhat to say to thee." So Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, *Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.*"

Who can tell what Samuel felt when he heard that *the Lord had spoken to him*! When he went and lay down again, he must have felt as he never felt before. How full his mind must have been of thoughts! He may have said, "*Will the voice speak to me again?*" So he *listened and listened*—and at last the voice *did* speak, and said, "*Samuel, Samuel!*" Perhaps little Samuel trembled, and turned very pale, when he said, "*SPEAK, LORD; for Thy servant heareth!*" He had never heard God's voice before—he had never before answered the living God. What a moment it was for Samuel!

Yes, God spake to a *child*, for it is written, "The Lord came and *stood*, and *called*, as at other times, *Samuel, Samuel!*" The Lord God standing beside the bed of a child, and speaking to him! I suppose it was *the Lord Jesus Christ* Himself, who came, as a man, and spoke to

Samuel! How wonderful! Yes, he heard the voice. It was *the Lord Himself* calling him by his own name *Samuel*.

Now, when Samuel heard the Lord speaking to him, he said, "SPEAK, LORD; *for Thy servant heareth.*" And *what* did the Lord say to Samuel? He told him very sad things, that were going to happen to *Eli* and *his family*. Eli had *two sons*, called *Hophni*, and *Phinehas*, and they were very wicked—and God was angry with them because of their sins. And God was angry with *Eli too*, because he had not corrected his sons, as he ought to have done. When they did anything wrong, *he did not punish them*—he only spoke gently to them. He let his sons have their own way, and that was very bad for them.

Think, my child, of what you have just read. God was angry with Eli, *because he did not punish his children when they deserved it!* I hope *your father and mother punish you*, when you deserve it. You would not like to grow up, and be wicked, as Eli's sons were. But, if you are not corrected when you are young, how can you be a good child *now*, and how can you be a good man, or woman, when you *grow up?* But you must pray much for *a new heart*, and for

faith in Jesus Christ, and then you will be a good child, and not require to be punished.

Samuel must have been very sorry to hear that God was going to punish Eli, and his family. Eli had been very kind to Samuel, and Samuel must have loved Eli very much. And though Eli's sons were very wicked, perhaps they too were kind to Samuel. Perhaps they had often played with him, and given him sweetmeats, or some other good things. Samuel was only a child, and perhaps he did not know how wicked they had been. And now he must have been very sorry to hear that God was going to bring them to sore trouble, and death, because of their wickedness.

Samuel lay still on his bed after the Lord had spoken to him. He must have felt as he had never done before. My child, I cannot tell you how Samuel felt, and you cannot know it either. The Lord God had spoken to him, and had visited his soul. He must have felt very happy that *now he knew God*; for God had taught Samuel to know Himself. His heart must have felt very tender. Oh, I hope *you* will some day *know God*, and then you will know a little how Samuel felt then.

But as Samuel lay still, he must have thought of Eli and his sons. His heart must have been sore for them. He must have said, "*How can I tell Eli what God has told me? How sorry he will be to hear it!*" So Samuel lay still, till it was daylight, and then he got up, and opened the doors of the House of the Lord. I wonder if he went that morning, to watch for the sun rising. I think his heart must have been too full to do so.

When morning came, and little Samuel was moving about, Eli called him to his bedside, and asked him *what* the Lord *had said to him*. I daresay Samuel hung his head, and said nothing. He was afraid to speak.

Eli saw that the Lord had said something, that Samuel did not like to tell. I daresay he thought that it was about himself and his sons. So Eli said, "*What* is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee, *hide it not from me.*"

Perhaps little Samuel was still afraid to speak, and then Eli said to him, "My son, you must not be afraid to tell me. If the Lord is going to punish me, and my sons, the Lord will punish you, if you do not tell me." For Eli

said, "God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that He said unto thee." *So Samuel told Eli every word.*

It was very sad for Samuel to have to tell Eli what God had said of him—but Samuel knew that it was right to do so, and *so he did it*. Children ought always to tell, when they are asked where they have been, and what they have done. When they think that they will be punished for it, they don't like to tell. Some children are very obstinate, and will not tell for a long time. And some will even *tell stories*, and say they did not do it. But all that is very naughty. Is it not worse to be obstinate, or to tell stories, than to be punished? My dear child, always tell *at once*; and don't keep back anything, that you ought to tell. *God sees you—does He not know it?*

We see how God spoke to Samuel. Does God ever speak to children *now*? Not quite in the same way that He spoke to Samuel. They *do not hear a voice* speaking to them, as Samuel did. But God speaks to their souls, if He draws them by His Spirit, and converts them. I cannot tell you, my child, *what it is*. I hope

you will *feel* it some day, if you have not felt it yet.

I once knew a girl of nine years and a-half old. She liked much to hear and to speak of Jesus—it was the greatest pleasure that she had. I asked her how long she had loved Jesus, and believed in Him. She told me that, when she was eight years old, she had heard a minister preach of *the Blood of Jesus Christ*, that cleanseth from all sin—and that, ever since that time, she had thought much about Jesus, and what she must do to be saved. Now when that girl heard of Jesus, and it entered into her heart, *the Lord had spoken to her*. My child, may the Lord so speak to you!

But does the Lord never speak to children, and *they do not hearken*? Oh yes. “God speaketh *once, yea twice*, yet man perceiveth it not.” (Job xxxiii. 14.) When children are sick, it is *God speaking to them*, and bidding them *repent*, and *believe in Jesus*. When they go to church and hear about Jesus Christ—or when they have kind teachers to tell them about the Bible, it is *God speaking to them*. Oh my dear child, I pray that you may have *God’s Holy Spirit*, that you may both *hear* the Lord speak, and *do* His will, as Samuel did.

Samuel became one of the Lord's prophets, when he was a *child*. He grew up to be a man, and he lived to be an old man. He had learned to know God when he was very young, and he lived to the glory of God all his days. The Bible tells us many more things about Samuel, when he was a *man*—but we have now considered what he was as a child, and we must say *farewell* to *Samuel*.

My dear child, may you *see Samuel* one day in the kingdom of *heaven*!

THE CHILD MEPHIBOSHETH.

MEPHIBOSHETH—what a long name that is! It is hard to say. Can *you* say Mephibosheth? It is said like this, Me-fib-o-sheth. Can you say it *now*?

And *who* was the child that had so hard a name? Who was Mephibosheth? He was the son of *Jonathan*. And who was Jonathan? Have you not heard of *David*, and *Jonathan*? Jonathan was the son of *Saul*, King of Israel. So, then, Jonathan was Mephibosheth's *father*, and Saul was his *grandfather*.

The Bible does not tell us a great deal about Mephibosheth. Poor child! when he was five years old, his father Jonathan, and his grandfather Saul, were both killed in one day. They were fighting in a battle, and they both died. Poor Mephibosheth! To lose both his father, and grandfather in one day! And his two uncles, *Abinadab* and *Melchishua*, were both killed at the same time.

Poor Mephibosheth ! Perhaps his father kissed him when he went away, and said, " I will soon come back and see you, my child." His grandfather may have taken him on his knee, and said, " Don't cry, Mephibosheth ; we shall soon come again." But the poor child never saw his father, or grandfather, or his two uncles, any more.

Yes, and there are many children *now*, whose fathers and grandfathers have been killed in the wars. They went away to fight, and they hoped to see their dear children again—but they never came back—they never saw their little ones any more ! Some of their children were old enough to know that their dear father was going away, and I daresay they cried very much to see him go. Others were so young, that they did not know anything about it. Their father kissed them when he went away, but they did not know it. They cannot remember their father at all. And when they see other children sitting on their father's knee—or holding his hand, as they walk along—perhaps they say, " I wish I had a father, like that little boy ! "

My dear child, have *you* a father ? How

thankful you ought to be! How *good* you ought to be! And when you see little children dressed in *black*, and some one says, "Their father is dead," should you not be sorry for them? And should you not pray to God to take care of them, and to give them a new heart, that they may believe in Jesus, and that their souls may be saved?

But, my child, perhaps *you* have lost your father. Was he killed in battle? Did he never come back to see you again? Well, it was God who took your dear father away. It makes you very sad; but God did it, that you might think about your precious soul. I hope you *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. God is able to take care of you. I hope you have a new heart, and then God is your Father, and you are His child, and at last you shall go and live with God for ever and ever.

The child Mephibosheth was not very far from the place where the battle was fought, when his father was killed. Many little children have been in towns, where they were fighting. When they were in bed they heard the guns firing, and when they got up they saw sad sights. Perhaps their mothers had to take

them in their arms and run away, for fear they should be killed.

My dear child, how good the Lord has been to you ! You never saw such a sight as that in England, where you live. Children in other countries have seen such sights—but God has kept *you* from seeing them. Let us praise the Lord for His goodness, and think of the poor children in other lands, that have seen such terrible things.

When the news came that Saul and Jonathan were dead, I daresay they said, "Make haste, make haste, and flee away. The enemy are coming. The soldiers will kill you, if you don't make haste." Now when the nurse heard that, she took the child Mephibosheth in her arms, and fled ; and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame." (2 Sam. iv. 4.)

Perhaps the nurse fell down stairs—or else she tripped over something that lay in the way—or her foot slipped, as she was running with the child in her arms, and she fell, and so the child was hurt. It must have been a sad fall. Both of the child's legs were broken, or hurt so

badly in some other way, that he was lame on both feet, as long as he lived. (2 Sam. ii. 13.)

I daresay it was a long time before they could get a doctor to come, and the poor child must have been in great pain. Only think of poor Mephibosheth! He must have cried because his father, and grandfather, and uncles were dead—he cried too because he was in *pain*. How sad it must have been to see Mephibosheth!

How sorry the nurse must have been! I daresay she would rather have broken her own leg, than that the child should be hurt. She was doing her best to save him. She ran so fast because she wished him to be safe. I daresay Mephibosheth said, "Don't cry, Nurse—it was not your fault—you could not help falling." I hope, he said also, "It was God's doing, Nurse—so don't cry any more."

Have you not read that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without God"? This means that nothing can happen to us, unless it is God's will. We should not be cross, and complain, when anything happens to us, but say, "*It is the Lord*—let Him do as seemeth Him good." When God suffers accidents to

happen to children, it is to make them think of Him—to teach them to seek after the *salvation* of their souls.

I have seen some children with their legs broken, and then they had to lie on their beds for many weeks. They were obliged to lie on their backs all the time. They could not lie on their side, for fear their leg should get out of place. How tired they must have been of lying on their back! How much patience they must have needed! At first it was very painful, and they cried very much. But then the pain went away, and they lay quiet.

I have seen them with their playthings on the bed. Yes, and I have seen them read the Bible, and other good books. I hope some of them liked to hear of Jesus, and looked to Him to save their souls. I know one little boy that has been sick in bed for years, and he is so happy, because he loves so much to think of Jesus, and to read about Him. But there are not many boys like *him*. There are not many boys, that have a *new heart*, and *believe in Jesus*. Some children, when they are *sick*, will like to hear of Jesus; but when they get well, they forget all about Him. That is very sad.

Poor Mephibosheth! He had not only one

leg broken, but two—and there he lay on his bed in great pain. My dear child, if you lie down this night with your limbs whole, and with no pain, I hope you will thank God for it, and think of the many children that are sick and suffering. Some have broken legs; some have fevers; some have been nearly burnt to death. Oh, how thankful you ought to be when God keeps you from harm!

When Mephibosheth was hurt and had to lie still on his bed, perhaps he thought that he should soon get well, and run about, as he did before. But, poor child, he was never able to run again. When other children were at play, he had to sit still. He was a poor cripple all his days. I daresay he had playthings to amuse himself with—but they had not so many playthings then, as they have now. And there were no pleasant little books for children then—nor pictures for them to look at—for they did not know how to print then. Mephibosheth would have been glad to have many of the things, that children have now-a-days.

Mephibosheth's father was a *Prince*, and his grandfather was a *King*. Had they not been killed, Mephibosheth would have lived as a

prince also, and perhaps have had everything that he could wish. But when his father was killed, he became poor; and if some kind friends had not taken care of him, he would have died of want. (2 Sam. ix. 4.)

I have known of children now-a-days, whose fathers once were rich, but they lost all their money, and became poor. The children thought that they too would be rich, and ride in carriages, but they have had to work hard, that they might have something to eat.

When any person is lame like Mephibosheth, there are not many ways, in which he can work. He could not dig, nor follow the plough. He could not be a bricklayer, and go up a ladder. He could not be a groom, and rub down the horses. He could not be a postman, and carry out the letters. He could not be a soldier, to march about and fight—nor a sailor, to climb about the ship. He could not be a carpenter, nor a shopman, nor an errand boy to go messages. But he might still learn some trade, or other; and if he could *write* well, he might be a clerk, and write letters, and keep accounts. How useful it is to be able to read, and write well! I hope you will learn to do so. And *then*, if you should

be hurt in the feet, you would still be able to work in another way.

Take care, then, and be very diligent. Try to read, and to write, as well as you can—for you don't know how much good it may do you, if you grow up to be a man. People sometimes say, "Can your son read and write well? If he can, he shall be my servant—and if he is well behaved, I will give him a better place." If you can read well, you may also read the Bible much more than if you read badly—and if you can write well, you may write out *texts*, or *hymns*, or anything that you wish. It is a fine thing to be a good scholar.

When Mephibosheth came to be a man, *King David* was very kind to him. David loved *Jonathan* very much, and when he heard that Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son, he was very good to him. He gave him back all the money, and all the land, that had belonged to his grandfather Saul. David took Mephibosheth to live in his own house, and made him sit at his own table, and treated him as one of his own sons. David was kind to him for his father Jonathan's sake. And when David saw that Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet,

and heard how his nurse had let him fall, I daresay he pitied him the more, and promised to be his friend as long as he lived.

So, then, Mephibosheth was not a poor man any longer—for he had servants of his own, and lived as a king's son. (2 Sam. ix.) If Mephibosheth's nurse was still alive, how glad she must have been when David was so kind to him! I hope Mephibosheth was kind to *her*, and that when he became rich, he gave her everything that she had need of.

Children should be very kind to their nurses. How much trouble they have with the children when they are sick! They often sit up with them at night, and carry them about in their arms. Nurses often love children as much as if they were their own. When nurses are so kind, ought not the children to love *them*? And when they go to school, and come home for the holidays, should they not remember their nurses, and be glad to see them again?

But children are often naughty, and then they make their nurses sad, and give them a great deal of trouble. I hope you don't do so. I hope you do as they bid you, and go to them when they call you. And when they come to

fetch you to bed, I hope you go quietly with them, and don't cry and be angry with them, as some children are.

You should take care, too, and not give more trouble in the nursery than you can help, nor make a noise when the baby is asleep. I hope you behave as well in the nursery, as you do in the parlour. Remember, God sees you everywhere. God hears what you say to your nurse, as well as what you say to your father, or your mother. Therefore take care, and behave well to her.

If children have been naughty, and their nurse tells their mother what they have done, sometimes they are angry, and say, "Nurse, you ought not to tell tales out of the nursery." But it is not right to say so. Should not your father and mother know what you have done? Ought not the nurse to tell them? Oh, yes, she ought to do so, and you ought to thank her for it. Yes, and children ought never to do anything, that they don't wish their father or their mother to know, and *then* the nurse would have nothing to tell of them.

I hope Mephibosheth behaved so to his nurse—but the Bible does not tell us anything more of him as a child, therefore we must now have done with *Mephibosheth*.

THE CHILD ABIJAH.

DID you ever hear of the child *Abijah*? Perhaps not. But, if you have never heard of him, I think you will like to hear of him *now*. And I hope you will *see* Abijah one day; for he is gone to heaven, and I hope you will go there too.

And *who* was Abijah? He was the son of *Jeroboam*, King of Israel. Now, *Jeroboam* was a very wicked man—one of the most wicked men, that ever lived. He made *two golden calves*, and said unto the people, “Behold thy *gods*, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (1 Kings xii. 28.) And so he taught the people to worship the golden calves.

Did you ever hear of any *other* golden calf, that was made? Have you not read of the calf that *Aaron* made for the people, when *Moses* was in the mount with God—and how God was

angry with the people, and punished them for their sin? (Exod. xxxii.)

It is a great sin to worship anything but God. Have you not learned the *Second* Commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them"? (Exod. xx. 4, 5.)

How could the people be so foolish? Did not God *make man*? How, then, can man *make God*? But, my dear child, nothing is so foolish as sin. Sin makes men do many foolish things. If you wish to be *wise*, you must be *good*. And *how* are you to be good? By *believing in Jesus Christ*, and by having *God's Holy Spirit* to dwell in you.

What a wicked man Jeroboam must have been! Had he not heard how angry God was with the people for making the golden calf in the wilderness? Oh, yes, he *must* have heard of it—and *yet* he did the same thing.

But, my dear child, how often *children* do what they *know* to be wrong! Don't they know that they must not tell stories—that they must not be angry, and say bad words? Don't

they sometimes take things, that they ought not to touch? Don't they *know* that God has told them not to do so—and *yet* they do it? What poor sinful creatures we are! *Jeroboam* was a great sinner—and so, my child, are *you*; and you cannot go to heaven, unless you have your sins taken away by the blood of Jesus Christ. You must have a *new heart*, and then you will try not to do what you know to be wrong, and not to be like that wicked king *Jeroboam*.

God was angry with *Jeroboam*, not only because of his own sins, but because he made others sin also. He taught the people to worship the golden calves.

My dear child, you must take care that you don't lead others into sin. Has your mother forbid you to do anything? You must not say to your little brother or sister, "Mamma has told us not to do it; but never mind, she will not know anything about it,"—and so you go and do it. Oh, my child, will you make God angry with your little brother, or sister? Will you make your father, and mother angry with them too? Can you bear to see *them* punished,

because *you* made them do wrong? When you go to bed, and lie thinking of what you have done, does it make you happy to think that God is angry with your little brother, or sister—and that it is *your fault*?

Jeroboam was a wicked man, and his wife was a wicked woman. They helped one another to sin. They did everything that was bad in the sight of God. They did not pray together—they did not read the Bible together. They did not teach their children to fear God. They ate, they drank, they feasted—they lived all their days in sinful pleasure—they did not think about their souls. They lived as if they had no souls at all—as if God had never said, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” (Psa. ix. 17.) How sad that people should live so! And yet how many men, and women—how many children, do so still! My child, it is very sad to be “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” God grant it may not be so with *you*!

But did not Jeroboam and his wife go to the house of God? Did they not take their children too? No, they did not go *there*. They went to the idol’s temple. There they saw a *calf*, made of *gold*, set up, and they fell down

and worshipped it. Oh, what a way of going to prayer was that! How should *we* like, some Sabbath-day, to find a golden calf set up in the church—to have no prayers, and no singing, and no sermon to tell us about Jesus Christ—to have only a golden calf! And then, there would be *no Sabbath-school—no Sabbath teachers—no Bible* learnt at home—*no hymns* said by heart—to have nothing but a *golden calf!*

Would that do instead of the Bible—instead of God—instead of Jesus Christ? Would that do instead of the Holy Spirit! My dear child, what do you think? I hope you like to hear about *Jesus Christ*. I hope you look to Him to save your soul. I hope you say, “Thank God we have the *Bible*—thank God we have not the golden calf!”

You have heard what wicked people *Jeroboam* and his wife were—could there any good thing come out of such a family? My dear child, come and see! Come, and let us hear about their child *Abijah*, and we shall see what God can do. Yes, *Abijah* was the son of *Jeroboam*; and *yet* *Abijah* was a good child—a *very* good child. I hope *you* are as good as *Abijah*.

And *how* do we know that Abijah was a good child? Because God himself told His Prophet; and it has been written for us in the Bible, that *we* might know it too. When *God says* that a child is good, it must be true—for God knows all things—God cannot be mistaken. Men often make mistakes. If a child behaves well, when he is walking out, or in company, they say, "What a good child he is!" They don't see him when he is at home—that he is often naughty, and cross. They *say* he is a good child; but he is a *bad* child. So you see that men are often mistaken, but God knows all things as they are.

And *what* did God say of *Abijah*? He said, "In him is found *some good thing* toward the Lord God of Israel." (2 King xiv. 13.) Abijah had "*some good thing* in him." What does that mean?

Jesus said, "There is *none good but one*; that is *God*." (Matt. xix. 17.)

St. Paul said, "For I know that *in me* (that is in my flesh) dwelleth *no good thing*." (Rom. vii. 18.)

Solomon said, "There is *not a just man* upon earth, *that doeth good*, and sinneth not." (Eccles. viii. 20.)

David said, "There is *none* that doeth good ; *no, not one.*" (Ps. xiv. 3.)

How, then, could Abijah be good? Was not Abijah a sinner? Oh yes, my child, he *was* a sinner! God does not say that Abijah was good in himself. He says, "There is some good thing *found* in him." Have you not read what Jesus said; that God will "give *good things* to them that ask Him"? (Matt. vii. 11.) And *what* good things does He mean? He meant that God would "give *the Holy Spirit* to them that ask Him." (Luke xi. 13.)

So, then, it meant that Abijah was *born again*. God had given *the Holy Spirit* to him. Without *that*, Abijah would have been like other children; God would not have said of him such things as these.

And *how* do you think that Abijah *showed* that he had a new heart? He showed it "*toward the Lord God of Israel.*" No doubt he loved to *pray*—he often spoke to the Lord his God. I daresay Abijah often went by himself into the garden, or into the wood, and as he walked along, he used to speak words of prayer, and felt happy that he was alone with God. When God looked down upon Abijah, as he lay

upon his bed, whether it was night, or morning, He might often say, "*Behold, he prayeth!*" because Abijah loved his prayers, and did not say words without thinking what he was saying, or to whom he was speaking. Many children do this. I hope *you* don't do it—for *that is not prayer.*

Perhaps *Abijah* had some part of the Bible to read. He might have had the *Books of Moses*. Do you *know* which they are? The *first five* books in the Bible. If you don't know their names, you had better learn them now. He may also have had the *Psalms of David*, and the *Proverbs of Solomon*—besides the Books of *Joshua*, and the *Judges*. But *then*, you know, there was *no printing* in those days.

If Abijah read any part of the Bible, it must have been much more trouble to him than it is to *you*. It was all written then on *parchment*: that means *sheep's-skin*; and it was not very easy to hold it in the hand, because the rolls of parchment were so long. Abijah must have spread it out upon the table, and held it fast down with both his hands, all the time he was reading. You would not like to have to do that, instead of having a Bible that you can hold so nicely while you read it!

I daresay Abijah said, "I am so sorry that my father and mother worship the golden calves! Why do they this great wickedness, and sin against God? As for *me*, I will worship the Lord my God, and Him only will I serve." And perhaps, when Abijah saw all the people going on the Sabbath-day to worship the golden calf that was in Bethel, he lifted up his heart to God, and prayed that they might have a new mind, and be turned away from idols.

I wonder if Abijah had any one to speak to him about his soul, and to teach him the ways of the Lord. We cannot think that his *mother* ever taught him to pray, or to repeat texts of Scripture, or to say hymns. His *father* never took him by the hand, and led him to the house of God. He did not see his father read the Bible to the servants and the family, and pray with them every night and morning. None of Abijah's brothers and sisters spoke to him about God, and His holy Word. *Sisters* are often kind, and teach their little brothers to read, and to pray—but it was not so with Abijah. The child Abijah was the only one of all the family that feared God.

But don't you think that Abijah may have had some good *nurse*, that spoke to him about his soul? When nurses fear the Lord, and believe in Jesus Christ, they pray to God that the children may be taught to know Him too. They ask God to give them *the Holy Spirit*. They talk to them of *Jesus Christ*—how He died to save sinners. They tell the children that God sees them all the day long, and that they must take care what they say, for *God hears them*. How good it is when children have such nurses! Perhaps *Abijah* had a nurse that did so. Or some of the other servants may have feared God, and have spoken to Abijah—for men-servants, and maid-servants may do much good to others, when they fear God.

Or Abijah may have had some kind friend, that came to his father's house, that would speak to him of the things of the Lord. Jero-boam was a wicked king, and most of his lords and great men were wicked too, but perhaps some of them worshipped God, and loved His Word. Abijah would be very glad to see them come, and would like to go with them to some quiet part of the room, that they might tell him what he loved to hear.

Are *you* glad to see folks come to the house,

that will speak to you of God, and Jesus Christ? You are pleased when they give you cakes, or playthings. Ought you not to like them still better, if they care for your precious soul?

Now, the child Abijah fell *sick*—he was very sick indeed. It was not a cold, or a headache, or that he had fallen and hurt himself a little. It must have been a fever, or consumption, or an inflammation, or some other very bad illness; for Abijah's friends soon saw that it was a dangerous disease, and they feared that he might *die*.

Should you not have liked to see Abijah when he was sick, and to hear what he said? He had loved the Lord when he was in health, and I doubt not that he loved God still more when sickness came. For sickness and trouble make God's children seek Him the more; and then they find that He is very near, and that He will never leave them, nor forsake them.

Perhaps, when Abijah fell sick, he said, “*My times are in Thine hand.*” (Ps. xxxi. 15.) I will bear patiently what the Lord puts upon me, for ‘whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.’ (Prov. iii. 12.) I love God, and God loves me. He will not do anything that is bad for me.” Dear child! the

Lord *did* love him, for God spoke good of him, and, no doubt, God made all his bed in his sickness, and gave him much comfort in his time of need.

Somebody may have said to Abijah, "Are you not sorry to be sick? How is it that you look so happy?" And he may have said, "I am happy because God is with me. He does not leave me by night, or by day. God knows what is best for me. Why should I complain? God's will be done."

Abijah got worse, and worse. He must have seen his friends look very grave when the doctor came, and felt his pulse, and said how ill he was.

Perhaps he saw them weeping, and said to them, "Why do you weep? I am not afraid to die—for God loves me, and I love God. I shall be glad to go, and be with God."

His nurse may have said, "Should you not like to live, and be a *king*?"

But Abijah may have said, "Oh no, Nurse, I don't wish to live—I don't wish to be a king. To be with God is far better."

If any one said "Abijah, shall we pray to the *golden calf* for you, that you may get well," he must have said, "Oh no! you must pray to

God, and not to graven images." And I dare say he prayed for his father and mother, and all his friends, that they might learn to know God, and not bow down to idols any more.

And *what* was it that made Abijah so happy on his sick bed? Why do we think that Abijah was not afraid to die? Abijah had never heard of JESUS CHRIST. His nurse could not say to him, "Abijah, *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*" Abijah lived many hundred years before Jesus Christ came. He could not say, "Jesus is gone before, to prepare a place for me." No, but he knew that God had promised to send a Saviour, to save his soul. He must have heard of *Shiloh*—for that was the name they gave to Jesus before He came. (Gen. xlix. 10.)

He knew that God had told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that this Saviour should come. Perhaps Abijah had heard what *Job* said—"I know that *my Redeemer liveth*, and that He shall stand at the latter day on the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job xix. 25, 26.)

Abijah must have heard also how they sacri-

ficed goats, and lambs, to the Lord in His temple at Jerusalem; and God may have taught him to know that, as the blood of the goats and lambs was poured upon the altar, so a Saviour's blood was required to wash away his sins. And so, I daresay Abijah had faith in God's Word, and believed His promises.

I think Abijah knew the Psalms of David, and that he may have said, "I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Ps. xxxii. 5.)

"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." (Ps. cxxx. 34.)

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy; He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is higher than the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him; as far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps. ciii.)

Oh yes, my dear child, I have no doubt that Abijah felt that he was a great sinner; that he

would say, " My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head " (Ps. xl. 12); and that he believed that God, through His great mercy, had forgiven him his sins.

I hope you will read carefully the texts that are written above, that you may see what Abijah must have felt, and how happy he may have been on his bed of sickness. And if *you* fall sick, my child, may you be as happy as Abijah! God taught Abijah, and God can teach *you*. Abijah loved God and His Word, and, by God's grace, so may *you*. God made Abijah a child of God; God made him fit to die—and God may do the same for *you*. I hope you thank God that Jesus Christ is come. This is what Abijah could not do. May God give you *His Holy Spirit*, and teach you to *believe in Jesus Christ*. And then you will be safe and happy, not only when you are well, but if you are sick also.

Jeroboam and his wife were very wicked folks, but they loved their child Abijah, and they were very sorry when he fell sick, and was like to die. I daresay everybody was fond of Abijah, because he was a good child. Good children are sure to be liked. Everybody is

glad to see them, and to be kind to them. What a good thing it is to see a well-behaved child—one who is quiet and gentle, and does not make a noise when he is told to be quiet—and does not love to tease others—and is always ready to be kind and civil. Folks are always glad when they see a good child come into the room. They are glad to take him with them when they go out to walk, and to have his company when they sit at home.

But when children are naughty, what a trouble they are! Then nobody wishes to have them. You would not like to hear anybody say of *you*, “I hope he will not come, he is such a bad boy!” Everybody is glad when naughty children go to bed, and are out of the way. It makes one sad to see a naughty child. Good children may love their play, and be active, and brave, but then they love to do what they are told, and they are not cross when they have anything to do that they do not like. Oh! I hope you are a good child, and that you pray to God to keep you so!

When Jeroboam and his wife saw how ill Abijah was, they said one to another, “What shall we do if Abijah dies?” And when he

got no better, they were afraid that he would not recover. So Jeroboam said to his wife, "There is *Ahijah* the prophet at Shiloh; he will be able to tell us whether our child will recover or not." So you see there was ABIJAH the son of Jeroboam, and AHIJAH the prophet. How like these two names are to each other! Do you see the difference between them? It is only a "b," and an "h." A-bi-jah, and A-hi-jah.

But *how* could the prophet Ahijah tell whether the child Abijah would get well or not? Does not God alone know these things? If *you* were sick, could any man say whether you would die or live? Oh no, but in those days God used to tell the prophets the things that would happen, when they went and asked Him in prayer. Ahijah would have said, "O Lord God, is this child sick unto death? Will he die or live?" And then if God were pleased to tell, He would say to the prophet, "The child will *live*," or, "The child will *die*."

Did you ever read of King *Hezekiah*, when he was sick, how the prophet *Isaiah* came to him, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live"? (Isa. xxxviii. 1.)

There was another King named *Ahaziah*. He fell out of a window, and hurt himself very badly indeed. So he sent to ask of *Baal-zebub*, a false god, whether he should recover of his sickness or not. But the angel of the Lord said to the prophet *Elijah*, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the King of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed, on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." (2 Kings i. 2—4.) God meant that King *Ahaziah* should have sent at once to His prophet, to ask whether he should live or die.

You have heard of *Saul*, the King of Israel. Did you ever read how "the *asses* of Kish, Saul's father," were lost? I suppose they got away in the night, and in the morning they could not be found. So Kish told his son Saul to take a servant with him, and go and look for the asses. So they went a great way. They looked everywhere; they asked of everyone they met—but they could not find the asses. So then they went to *Samuel* the prophet to ask *him* what had become of the asses. Now, the

Lord had told it to Samuel, and Samuel told it to Saul, saying, "As for thine asses, that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found." (1 Sam. ix. 3—20.)

What a pleasant thing it is to read the histories of the Bible! I hope, my dear child, that you like to do so. I hope you will attend to what you have now read, and remember how the Lord was pleased to send messages by His servants the prophets to the men, of whom we have been reading. What were their names? *Hezekiah*, King of Judah—*Ahaziah*, King of Israel—and *Saul*.

We have seen that God does not do so now. There are no prophets in these days. If we are sick, or if our friends are sick, we must wait patiently to see what God will do—whether they shall live, or die. We may pray to God for them, and say, "O God, *if it be Thy will*, may they recover from this sickness—but *Thy will be done!* But, O God, have mercy upon their *souls*, and may they *believe in Jesus*, that their sins may be forgiven, and that they may go to heaven if they die." Sometimes our friends are sick a long time, and we have to wait many, many days, to see how it will be—but God can

give us patience to wait, and He can make it a blessing to us, whether they get well, or die.

King Jeroboam and his wife worshipped the golden calves; but when their child was like to die, they knew that none but the Lord could tell whether he would recover of his sickness or not. And so it is still: many wicked men never think of God when they are well, but if they are sick or in trouble, then they cry to the Lord for help. But God does not hear the prayers of the wicked. If a man feels that he is a sinner, and is sorry for his sins, and looks to Jesus Christ to be saved, God will hear that man, whether he is sick or well. But God will not hear those, who don't think about Him, or pray to Him, except when they are sick, and then forget Him as soon as they get well.

Now, Jeroboam wished to send to Ahijah the Prophet, to ask whether Abijah would live or die. But he felt ashamed to do so. He must have said, "How can we go to Ahijah? He knows that we worship the golden calves; he knows that we never go to the house of God. He has often spoken to us about our souls, but we have not done what he told us,

How can we go to *him*? Will he not say that he can have nothing to do with us? Will he not send us away, and give us no answer?"

And so men, that never go to church, are ashamed to go and ask anything of the minister; and children that play truant from school, are afraid to meet the schoolmaster. It is sad to have a *guilty conscience*. Do you know what that means? It means, when your heart tells you that you have done something wrong, and you have not prayed to God to forgive you, and have not gone and told your fault to your father, or your mother. That is the way to be unhappy. When you have done anything wrong, you should go and tell it *at once*, and then you will be happy again.

So what did Jeroboam do? Did he fall down on his knees, and confess his sins to God, and ask God to forgive him? Did he go to Ahijah, and say that he was sorry that he had worshipped the golden calves, instead of serving the Lord God? Did he show that he had received a new heart, and that he was going to do better? Oh, no; he only did worse and worse—he added sin to sin. He had sinned against God *openly*, and now he was going to sin against Him *secretly*.

- So Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh; behold, there is Ahijah the Prophet . . . take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him; he shall tell thee what shall become of the child." (1 Kings xiv. 2, 3.)

Now, as Adam listened to his wife Eve, so did the wife of Jeroboam listen to her husband. She was a *Queen*, and was *dressed* as a Queen. If she had gone to Ahijah in her own clothes, everybody would have said, "There goes the *Queen*—there goes *the wife of Jeroboam!*" So she took off her fine clothes, and put on others, so that she might look like a common woman; and then, I daresay, she went out at a back door, and went down the street, and out at the gate of the city; and then, perhaps, she said, "How glad I am that nobody has seen me!"

But *did not God see her?* Ah, she did not think of that. When she changed her clothes, *did not God see her?* When she went out secretly, *was not God there?* "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see

him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Jer. xxiii. 24.) When that wicked Queen said, "Nobody knows that I am the wife of Jeroboam," *did not God know it?* Oh, what a foolish thing, what a sinful thing it is to forget that God sees us!

My dear child, have you ever read the 139th Psalm? Have you ever learned it by heart? If you have not, I hope you will do so now. It will teach you that God sees you always, by night and by day. You cannot do anything but *God sees it*. You cannot say anything, but *God hears it*. You cannot think anything, but *God knows it*. Oh, remember always that you are in the sight of God!

Adam and Eve hid themselves among the trees of the garden. But did not God see them? Did not God say, "Adam, where art thou?" (Gen. iii. 9.) When *Gehazi* ran after *Naaman* the Syrian, and got the things that he asked for, *did not God see him?* When his master said, "*Whence comest thou, Gehazi?*" he said, "Thy servant went no whither." (2 Kings v. 25.) But *did not God know* that this was a *lie*? Did He not know what *Gehazi* had done? Oh, my child, take care what you do. God sees you; He *does* indeed. Take care

what you *do*—take care what you *say*. Pray for God's Holy Spirit. Pray for a new heart, that you may speak and do what is right. Pray for faith in Jesus Christ, that all your naughty doings may be forgiven, and that you may be at peace with God.

So Jeroboam's wife went on her way, dressed like another woman. Have you not read of *another person*, who put on his brother's clothes, and pretended that he was his brother, that he might have his father's blessing? Don't you know who it was? It was *Jacob*. He put on *Esau's* clothes, and went to his father Isaac, and said that he was Esau. That was a great sin, and God brought Jacob into trouble because of his sin. Have you not heard it said, "*Be sure your sin will find you out*"? (Num. xxxii. 23.) It means that if you do wrong, it will certainly be found out at last.

Ahijah the Prophet could not see. He was very old, and his eyes were quite blind; but the Lord had told him that the wife of Jeroboam had dressed herself up, and was coming to ask him about her son. Ahijah was only a *man*, and could not have known it unless the Lord had told him. God told Ahijah what he

was to say to that wicked woman. At last she came to the Prophet's house, and God said to Ahijah, "*There comes the wife of Jeroboam!*" So, when he heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, he said, "*Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another woman? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.*"

What must she have felt when she heard those words! She had not yet come into the room—she was only at the door. *Before* she asked, Ahijah *answered*. Ahijah was blind, but he knew who she was. She had dressed herself up, but she was found out. She could not hide herself from God. She was not allowed to deceive the Lord's Prophet. Poor, sinful, unhappy woman, what could she do? what could she say? Ah, my child, and what will sinners do in the *judgment day*, when God brings all their sins to light? What will *you* do in that day, if you have not had your sins taken away by a *Saviour's blood*? -

How do you think the wife of Jeroboam felt when she heard the Prophet speak to her? Don't you think she must have trembled, and turned very pale? It must have been a sad sight to see. There she was, standing before

Ahijah, with the loaves and the cracknels, and the cruse of honey in her hand. Could she offer them to the Prophet? Oh, no, he would not have them; he would not take a present from *her*. How sad she must have felt! What did she think of herself *then*?

Ahijah told the wife of Jeroboam that he had bad news to tell her from the Lord. God was angry with Jeroboam and his wife, because they had made the golden calves, and taught Israel to worship them. They had committed many other sins, and God said that He was now going to punish them for their sins. The Prophet told the wife of Jeroboam that they should all be slain with the sword. That none but the child Abijah should come to the grave in peace. That none of them should be buried but Abijah—that the dogs should eat some of them when they were dead, and the fowls of the air should eat the rest. “Arise thou therefore,” said he, “and get thee to thine own house; and when thy feet enter into the city, *the child shall die.*” (1 Kings xiv. 12.)

So Jeroboam's wife went forth from the house of the Prophet. She must have felt very unhappy. I daresay she went as fast as she could,

in hopes that she might see her child once more. Perhaps she said, "The Prophet says that he will die as soon as my feet enter the city, and before I can reach the house, but I will *try* if I cannot get there before he dies—surely he will live till I get home. If he is still alive when I reach the city, he cannot die before I get to the house!"

When she got near the city, her heart must have beaten quickly, while she said, "*I wonder if he is still alive!*" At last she entered the city. Then *a little more*, and she was at her own door. Her foot was on the step—she had not yet got into the house—she asked, "Is Abijah still alive? My child is not dead—is he?" Perhaps they said, "No, he is not dead—he still lives."

She made haste to see her son once more—to give him one more kiss—to hear him once more call her "*Mother!*" But it was *too late*—it was *all over*. "He is gone!" they said. "Has he been dead long?" said she. "No," said they; "Your foot must have been on the *very step of the door*, when he breathed his last!"

My child, did not the Prophet speak true? Did not God know how it would be? Had He not fixed the time when Abijah should die?

Could God be mistaken? Oh no, God knows when everyone will die. He knows when *you* will die—the very *day*—the very *hour*—the very *minute*. Perhaps you think you are *sure* to live to be a *man*—but who can tell whether you will or not? Perhaps you may die while you are still a *child*—or when you are a *boy at school*—or when you are a *young man*. But God knows when it will be. He does not tell you *when* you will die—but He bids you *be ready*. He bids you *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and pray for *the Holy Spirit*, that you may be fit to die whenever your time may come.

Yes, Abijah was *dead*. The dear child was gone to *heaven*. When his mother came into the room, his body indeed was there, but his soul was *gone*. A few moments before, he might have opened his eyes to look at her—or held out his hand to her—or have tried to speak to her—but now it was all over, and Abijah would never speak again in this world. His mother may have wept aloud—but Abijah could not hear. She may have said, “Abijah!” but he did not answer. She may have kissed him, or embraced him, but he did not feel it. The body was dead—what could it do? What

could it say? Abijah was *dead*—he was dead *indeed*!

Happy Abijah! He loved God, and God loved him. He had often prayed to God, and now he was gone to be with God. Perhaps, when he was ill, he had often said, “I wish to go to heaven. I would rather go to God, than remain in this sinful world!” And *now* God had given him his heart’s desire.

Perhaps they said to him, “Abijah, you are going to die—you have but a short time to live!”

And he would answer, “I do not wish to live—I would rather die, and then I shall be happy—then I shall never sin any more.”

Yes, God took Abijah to Himself, that he might be happy for ever. God was going to punish Jeroboam and his family with terrible things; and God took Abijah before they came, so that he had not the pain of seeing them happen. *Happy Abijah!* He was far away from all pain, and trouble, and *sin*! He went to be with God, and therefore he was happy. My dear child, may *your* last end be like *his*!

Abijah was a *Prince*. His father and mother were a *King* and *Queen*. When Abijah was dead,

I daresay the body was laid in a very grand room. I daresay a very fine coffin was made, and everything was done to make a great show. Perhaps many people went to look at Abijah's dead body.

Many were sorry to hear that Abijah was dead and gone. They used to see him walk abroad, and they were glad to see him—for I daresay he was kind to everybody. When he was too ill to walk, they may have seen him in a *carriage*, and they were sorry to see Abijah look so ill. But *now* they saw him no more. They heard that he was *dead*. All the people were sorry—many of them wept. They had hoped, perhaps, that he would one day have been their *king*. All had something good to say of Abijah. But now he was *gone*! They would never see him alive again. Many must have said, "We must go, and take a last look at Abijah."

What did the Prophet say of Abijah? He said, "And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for *he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave*, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam." (V. 18.) His father and mother, and all the family, were not to die in

their beds, as Abijah had done—they were to be killed by the sword. They were *not to be buried*—the dogs, and the birds of the air were to eat them. But God said that *Abijah* should be *buried*—that his body should be laid in the *grave*.

Do you say, my child, "*What good* would it do Abijah to be *buried*? When he was dead, he would not know what was done to his body. When he was in heaven, he would not care if the dogs, or the fowls of the air, devoured his body"? That is true, my dear child, but it is God's will that dead bodies should be buried, and decently laid in the earth.

It is a solemn thing to die, and *funerals* are solemn things. God made man's body, and we are to pay respect to a dead body, for the Lord's sake. No one likes to see the dead bodies of their friends neglected—but they bury them, and lay them in the churchyard. And then, in the last day, they will rise again from the dust. That is called the "*Resurrection-day*"—when all men will come out of their graves—yes, and all who have died as *children* too. *What a day* that will be!

My child, *you* will see it—*your* body will rise again from the dead. I hope you will rise again

to go to *heaven*, and not to go to hell-fire. All that have *believed in Jesus*, and been *born again* will go to *heaven*—and they that have *not* believed in Jesus must *perish* for ever. Oh, my dear child, where shall *you* be in that day?

So they *buried* Abijah. He was a *King's son*, and kings' sons always have a *grand funeral*. They are not buried like the poor. There are many carriages, and many horses, and many people following after, and going before. And so it must have been when Abijah was buried.

How many people go to look at a funeral! How fond children are of seeing it! Yes, and I have often seen children go to look—and they have laughed, and made a noise, and played about near the house, where the hearse is standing—or in the churchyard. I have been sorry to see them do so. When we see a funeral, it ought to make us think of death—of God—of Jesus Christ. It ought to make us say, “I don't know how soon I may die, and be laid in the grave. Oh God, may I be ready when my time comes!”

Have you not heard of children dying, that were younger than *you*? Have you never seen a coach going to the churchyard, with a *little*

coffin laid across the *windows*, and a *white-edged pall*? They were taking a *baby* to be buried! So you see that babies *die*! You are not a baby now—you are older than a baby—perhaps you may die before long.

When Abijah was buried, "*all Israel mourned for him*," as the Lord had said. (Ver. 18.) I daresay all the shops were shut, and all the windows closed. Everybody went quietly. There was no noise heard in the streets. Everybody felt that they had lost a friend. As the funeral passed by, many people wept. They said, "There goes the body of Abijah! We shall never see Abijah any more! We shall never have so good a prince. We shall never see so good a child again!" Surely many must have wept, as they went along, and followed the body to the grave.

At last they came to the grave. The coffin was laid in the tomb. Many tears were shed when they saw it. They closed the tomb—and I daresay many said, "May I die, as Abijah did—and may I go to heaven, like him!" And then the people returned home weeping and sad.

Jeroboam and his wife had lost their child.

They had laid him in the grave. They returned to their house. Perhaps they went into the room where the body had lain—and said, “We shall never see Abijah any more!” How sad the house must have looked! While the dead body was there, there was still something left of Abijah—but now that was gone—and they were sad indeed!

Abijah had a *brother*—his name was *Nadab*—we know not whether he had any more brothers, or sisters. I daresay Nadab was very sorry when Abijah died, and that he wept very much when he was laid in the grave. Perhaps he said, “Abijah was very good; I will try and be as good as he, that I may be as happy when I die.” But Nadab was not a good child. He had not a new heart. He had *not* in him *any* “*good thing* towards the Lord God of Israel,” as Abijah had. He grew up to be a very wicked man. He was as bad as his father Jeroboam. He did not die in his bed; neither was he laid in the grave. He was *murdered* by *Baasha* (1 Kings xv. 27), and, no doubt, his body was eaten either by the dogs, or the fowls of the air, as the Lord had said.

Many children look very grave, when their

little brother, or sister, dies. It makes them think of God *for a little time*. Perhaps they say, "I must pray to God to save my soul. I must *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and be a good child." But, oh, how soon they forget it! How soon they are naughty again! Perhaps they never think any more of their little brother, or sister, that is gone—and, what is worse, they never ask God to give them *a new heart*—they never think much about their souls. No wonder that many of them become very bad children, and wicked men. No wonder that many of them are good in the sight of men, but wicked in the sight of God.

My dear child, if you hear that any of your little friends, or playfellows are dead—and that you will never see them again, it is the Lord God saying to you, "*Be ready also!*" It is the Lord God speaking to you! May you hear His voice! May you remember your Creator in the days of your youth! May God give you His Holy Spirit—for it is written, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." (Prov. viii. 17.)

THE CHILDREN AT BETHEL.

2 KINGS II. 23.

THERE was a town in the land of Israel, called *Bethel*. It was the same place where *Jacob* lay down to sleep, and saw the ladder, that reached from the earth to heaven. Have you not read of that in the Book of *Genesis*, in the 28th chapter? *Jacob* called the place *Beth-el*, which means the House of God, because God had appeared to him there—and so, when they built a town there, they called it by the same name, *Bethel*.

You have read how *Jeroboam*, King of Israel, made two golden calves, and taught the people to worship them. One of these calves was placed in *Bethel*. Only think, *Jacob* called it "*the house of God*," and then to make it the *house of a golden calf*—a place for an idol's temple! Was not this a great insult to the God of heaven? What would *Jacob* have said to this?

Now, there was a Prophet in Israel, called

ELISHA. He was a very good man—one that feared God with all his heart. He did not worship the golden calves. He went about telling the people that they ought to worship God, and not bow down to idols. I daresay he often preached, and read the Bible to them—and told them that, if they feared God and believed in His Word, they would go to heaven; but if they worshipped idols, they would go to hell fire. The wicked men and women, who worshipped the golden calves, must have hated Elisha—but those, who loved God, were always glad to see him, and to hear him preach.

I daresay you have also read about another Prophet called ELIJAH. Elisha used to wait upon Elijah, as his servant, and his friend. Now, one day as they were walking together, a chariot of fire came down from heaven, and took Elijah up to heaven, so that Elisha saw him no more. And so Elijah went to be with God. He did not die. His body was not laid in the grave. He went to heaven without dying.

Do you know who the *other* man was, that God took to heaven? His name was *Enoch*. So that if anybody says, "Can you tell me what two men went up to heaven, and did not die?"

you must say, ENOCH, and ELIJAH. If you look in the fifth chapter of *Genesis*, you will read about *Enoch*—and in the second chapter of the *second book of Kings* you will read about *Elijah*.

The wicked people, who worshipped the golden calves, did not believe that Elijah was gone up to heaven. They thought that Elisha was telling tales. *Elisha* the Prophet must often have been at *Bethel*. The people must have known him well by sight, and I daresay they often mocked him, and said, "There goes the man that will not worship the *golden calf*! There goes the man whose master was *taken up to heaven*! He *says* that Elijah went up to heaven—but we don't believe him."

I daresay they often told the children to run after him, and call him names. Elisha must have told them how wrong it was, and that God would certainly punish them, if they were so sinful. He could tell them that God heard every word they said, and that God would be angry with them if they said such naughty words.

Poor children, should we not pity them! Their parents did not teach them the fear of the Lord. They were not taught to read the Bible. They had no Sabbath-schools to go to.

Their parents worshipped the golden calves, and took them with them to the idol's temple. Their parents dishonoured God, and insulted His Prophet—no wonder that *they* did the same.

My dear child, should you not pity poor children, who have no one to teach them? You hear them say bad words. They learn to swear, and tell lies, and steal. You see them running about and doing many naughty things. Ah, should you not be sorry for them? Should you not pray for them? If *you* had no kind parents or teachers, you might be like one of *them*. You must not be angry with them, nor point at them, and say, "What bad children those are!" You must ask God to give them a new heart—to make them believe in Jesus Christ—and to send some teacher, that may take them to school, and teach them to do better.

Now, one day that Elisha was walking in the way near Bethel, a great many children came running after Elisha, calling him names. There *must* have been a great many—*perhaps* more than a hundred. I daresay they also threw stones at him, and did everything they could to tease and insult him. Perhaps they got all round him,

some before, and some behind, and I daresay they caught hold of him, and pulled him by the clothes—and all the while they cried out, "*Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head!*"

Very likely these children had heard their parents call Elisha, "Bald-head." They meant that Elisha should go away from them, and not come to *Bethel* again; or else they mocked him for saying that Elijah went up to heaven, and meant to say, "Go up to *heaven*, thou bald head! Thou sayest that Elijah is gone to heaven! If it is so easy to go up to heaven, why dost not thou go too?" No doubt they had heard people say so, and now they went and cried it after Elisha.

I daresay Elisha turned round and begged them to be quiet, and not to sin against the Lord. Perhaps he said to them, "If you go on calling me names, I must pray to the Lord to stop you—I must call upon God to punish you for your sin." But they would not hearken to him—they still cried out, "*Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head!*" So the Prophet turned round, and "*cursed* them in the name of the Lord."

What does it mean that he "*cursed* them"? I am almost afraid to say—it is something so

dreadful. It meant that God would *punish their sin*, as it deserved. And what does sin deserve? Is it not written that "*the wages of sin is death*"? (Rom. vi. 23.) And does that mean only the death of the *body*? Oh no, it means something much worse than that. Is it not said, "*The wicked shall be turned into Hell; and all the nations that forget God*"? (Ps. ix. 17.) Oh, what a dreadful thing the *curse* is! Only think what those wicked children brought down upon themselves by their sin!

But are not *all men* under the *curse*? Oh, yes; all *who do not believe in Jesus Christ* with a new heart. It is written—"for as many as are of the works of the law are under the *curse*; for it is written, "*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*" (Gal. iii. 10.)

This means that all men *sin*, and break God's holy law—and so all have God's curse upon them, unless they look to Jesus Christ for salvation. It is written, "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*" (Gal. iii. 13.) So that, if you believe in Jesus, you are not under the curse, but the blessing of God rests upon you. My dear child, if you do not understand what I

have said, you must *ask your father or mother*, or some other kind person, to *explain* it to you.

Elisha cursed the children in the name of the Lord. But was Elisha right to curse the children? Is it not said, "*Bless, and curse not*"? (Rom. xii. 14.) Yes, it is. But I suppose God *bade him* curse the children. Elisha was not angry with them, only because they called him names, but because they sinned against God, and mocked at His truth. *God* was angry with them. Elisha knew this. He knew that it was God's will that those wicked children should perish, and so he "*cursed* them in the name of the Lord." He prayed that God would punish them, as He thought fit, and as they deserved.

I wonder if the children still mocked Elisha when he said these words. Perhaps some of them *still* laughed at him, and threw stones. But lo! two wild beasts—*two she-bears* came out of the wood! Bears are very fierce animals. They love to kill men and women. They take them in their great paws, and hug them to death. *She-bears* are very fierce when they think any one is coming to take their young ones. Perhaps those two she-bears had young

ones in the wood, and they thought the children were coming to take them.

Oh, how frightened the children must have been then! How they must have run away! How they must have called on Elisha to save them from the bears! But it was all in vain—the bears came after them, and caught them—and killed *forty-two* of the children. What a sight it must have been to see! A few minutes before, the children were all running, and laughing, and skipping about—and now *forty-two* of them were lying dead on the ground! I daresay they had often gone to *play* in *that very wood*—perhaps they were going to play there when they met the Prophet. How little they thought, when they got up that morning, what would happen before night! Oh, what a dreadful thing sin is! What a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

And what must they have said in *Bethel*, when the rest of the children ran home and told what had happened! How the news must have spread through the town! Every mother must have said, "I hope my child was not there! I hope my child is not killed!" Many fathers, and mothers, and brothers, and sisters,

must have run to the place, to see whether *their* little ones were killed, or no. And when they came there, what a sight they saw! Many little *boys*, and I daresay little *girls* too, lying *dead on the ground!*

Don't you think that many of the parents must have said, "I wish I had taught my children better! I wish I had never let them run after the Prophet, and call him names!" What weeping there must have been in Bethel that day!

We think it sad to hear that *one* child is dead in a place; but to hear that *forty-two* children were all dead at once—all in the same place! How sad it must have been! We are not told in what month it happened, or on what day of the month—but surely they *never forgot* that day in *Bethel*. When the day came round every year, they must have said, "*This is the day the children were killed!*" People like to keep birthdays—but what a day to keep was *that!*

Don't you wonder whether the children, that were not killed by the she-bears, learned to fear God, and to repent of their sins? Do you think they were *sure* to do so? No, my child—not so. I have seen many children, that

have been sick, and like to die—and yet when they got better, they did not think about God. I have seen children who were struck with lightning, or almost burned to death in the fire. They were as near death, as the children that escaped from the she-bears—and *yet* they did not learn to think of their souls—they did not seek after God.

One thing is needful, and that is the *grace of God*. When children are sick, or in danger, they must have God's Holy Spirit to give them a new heart, and to bring them to Jesus—or they will be none the better for their afflictions. We must hope that some of those children at Bethel, and their parents too, received the grace of God, to do them good—and that some of those parents, whose children were killed, learned to say, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted!”

Perhaps some little boys and girls, when they went to bed that night, prayed that God would make them good children, and teach them to love and fear Him with all their heart. And perhaps, when they saw Elisha again, if ever he returned to Bethel, they went and asked him for his blessing, instead of calling him names. And so many children, who once did

not like to see the minister, or Sunday teacher, because they knew that they were naughty, are glad to hear him, and to see him, if they have since learned to love the Word of God.

My dear child, this is a sad history, but I hope you will not forget it. God caused it to be written for your instruction, that you may learn good lessons from it—that you may desire to be a good child, and have God's blessing, and not be a wicked child, and have His curse.

Now, if you had seen the forty-two children lying dead beside the wood, would you have said, "I wonder why God punished them so! Surely their sin was not so very great! They *only* called the Prophet names, and they are all *killed!*"

My dear child, *no sin* is a *small* sin. *All* sin is a *great* sin. Is it not a great sin to *disobey* God—not to do what God bids us, and to do what God forbids? Who were the *first* sinners? *Adam* and *Eve*. And what did they do? They took of the fruit of the tree, that God had told them not to touch.

Perhaps you would say that *this* also was a small sin. But *was* it a small sin? Did God

think it a small sin? Did not Adam and Eve die at last because they committed that sin? Oh, my child, *every* sin is a *great* sin. For every sin that men commit, they deserve to die. Pray to God to *teach you to understand* this. Without His grace you cannot know what it means. Oh, then, ask God to give you the Holy Spirit, that you may know the truth of God's Word.

The children at Bethel mocked Elisha. I daresay *you* never mocked your Minister, or your Teacher. But, my dear child, do you *mind* what they say? Do you try to do as they tell you? They bid you *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. Do you ask God to give you grace to do so? You say, "I am not a sinner, as those children were!" But are you a child of God? Are you on the way to heaven? Nothing will do but to *believe in Jesus*, and to *have a new heart*? Then how is it, my child, with *you*?

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.

2 KINGS IV.

WE have read how *Jeroboam* made the golden calves, and that many, very many, of the people bowed down to them, and worshipped them. We have seen how it was at *Bethel*, where the golden calf was, and how the children were slain, that mocked *Elisha*. But there were some of the people, that did not worship the golden calves. They feared God and worshipped Him. As often as they could, they went up to *Jerusalem* to God's holy Temple. They read His Word, and loved His Prophets. There were some families that were glad to see *Elisha*, and to have him speak to them. Some children also were glad to see him; they did not mock him, nor say, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head!"

I daresay *Elisha* was very kind to good children, and spoke gently to them. The young men, that used to live with him, must have

been very fond of him, for they did not like to go any where without him. If you read some day in the sixth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, you will see how the young men asked Elisha to go with them, when they went to cut down wood. It is a pleasant history to read.

One of the places, that Elisha often passed by, was called *Shunem*. A certain woman lived there, who was always very glad to see Elisha, and to hear him speak of the things of God. Her husband and she were very rich, and they always invited Elisha to stop and eat with them, as often as he came that way. They pressed him so much to do so, that he never passed by without stopping to see them. It must have been very pleasant to Elisha to see that they were so fond of him; for he knew that it was because they liked to hear of God and His Word. As they sat together at table, no doubt they often spoke of the things of God, and I daresay they often asked Elisha to pray with them.

They, who love God, like to meet together, and to speak of Him. They find it more pleasant than to talk of anything else in the world. I will tell you of a text of Scripture, that speaks of this very thing. I hope you will

be able to read it, and that you will remember it, for it is a very beautiful text. "Then they that feared the Lord *spake often one to another*; and the Lord *hearkened*, and *heard it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." (Mal. iii. 17, 18.)

You will find that text on the last page of the Old Testament. It shows you how God loves to hear us speak to one another about Him, and His dear Son Jesus Christ. If *children* talk to one another about Jesus Christ, *He hears them*, and *He loves* to hear it. And as you walk, holding your mother's hand, and you talk about what you have been reading in the Bible, and ask her to tell you a great deal about Jesus Christ, God hears all the time. And if you have a new heart, and really love God, and His dear Son, He says that you are one of His *jewels*—you are so dear to Him.

And, my dear child, if God loves to hear you speak good things, does He not dislike to hear

you say naughty things? He hears everything that you say. He knows every word that you say in the nursery and the parlour. Or if you quarrel with your brothers and sisters, and say angry words, *does not God hear it?* Should you like God to write down your naughty words in His Book? Should you like God to punish you for them. Then take care what kind of words you speak. May God give you grace to think and to speak of that which is good.

The woman that was so kind to Elisha lived at *Shunem*; and so she is called the *Shunammite*. I daresay her husband and she lived in a large house. The prophet Elisha was not used to live in great houses, and perhaps he did not feel quite so comfortable as in his own smaller house. For the woman said to her husband, "Let us make a *little chamber*, I pray thee, on the *wall*; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us, then he shall turn in thither." (2 Kings iv. 10.) And so, if Elisha came late at night, or early in the morning, he could go at once into the little chamber, without disturbing the family. Or if

he came in the heat of the day, he might go in at once, and lie down and refresh himself before he went to talk to them.

Ah, and can't you tell any other reason why Elisha would like to have a room all to himself? Just think. Don't you like to be alone when you *pray*? Little children kneel down at their mother's knee; but, my dear child, if you are fond of praying to God, you will like sometimes to be alone when you pray. *Elisha* prayed a great deal. I daresay he often went into some quiet place, that he might speak to God. And so the kind Shunammite built a little room, on purpose that he might go and be alone as often as he pleased. I hope you will one day know how pleasant it is to be alone with God.

There was not much furniture in the prophet's chamber. There was a *bed*, to lie on—and a *stool*, to sit upon—and a *table*, to sit at when he read the Bible, that he might spread out the roll of parchment before him. For we have read already that the books of the Bible were written then on parchment. They had no printed books in those days.

There was also a *candlestick*. Do you think there was a candle too? No, there was *no*

candle—for they did not know how to make candles then. How, then, did the prophet see in the dark? They burned *oil* in their candlesticks—oil with a wick—and so they had light. And *where* did the oil come from? It came from the *olive tree*, which bears large berries. They press the olive berries, and the oil runs out.

How happy Elisha must have been in his little chamber! He could go there whenever he liked. I daresay the Shunammite often said to her husband, "I wonder if Elisha will come to-day." And then perhaps she would say to her servant, "Go and see if Elisha is in his little chamber. Perhaps he is lying down there to rest. If he is asleep, don't disturb him. He will come in and see us by and by." I daresay she often said, "How glad I am that we built the little chamber on the wall for the man of God!"

As Elisha used to lie upon the bed to rest in the heat of the day, he would pray for the Shunammite and her husband, and think how kind they had been to him. In those countries the sun is so hot in the middle of the day, that they get up very early in the morning, to work

or walk in the cool of the day; and then they lie down to rest when the sun is hottest—So did the prophet Elisha.

When Elisha first knew the Shunammite and her husband, they had no child—no little ones to run in and out of the house, or to come and kiss them in the morning, and to say “Good night!” when they went to bed. But Elisha prayed that they might have a child. And when a child was born to them, they were very glad. He was their only child, and he was a great “pet.” They did not know how to love him enough. I daresay he was with his mother all day long, and when his father went out, he would kiss his boy before he went away—and when he came home, the first thing he would say was, “Where is the child?”

And then perhaps the child, as soon as he could walk, would try to run and meet his father, and hold out his little hands to keep him from falling. Good children like to see their father come home from his business, or his work. How much they have to tell him then, while they sit on his knee, and pat his cheek—and he asks them if they have been good children, and done all that their mother

bade them. How pleasant it is when children are good! How glad their father is to see them! But when they have been naughty, they hang down their heads, and are afraid to go and meet their father, when he comes home I hope you are a good child!

The Shunammite's child was very happy, I daresay. His father and mother feared God, and I hope they did not spoil their child—for spoiled children are never happy. I hope they made him an obedient child, and that he loved to do as they bade him. The prophet too would teach him, and tell him to love God, and to pray for His grace, and perhaps the child often went into his room, to see if he was there, and asked him if he would not come in and see his father and mother. Sometimes the child would come running in, and say, "I see the Prophet coming! Shall I go and meet him, and bring him in?"

How happy children are when they can walk and run by themselves! If they have a garden to play in, or a field to run about in, they are as happy as the day is long. The Shunammite's husband had a great many fields of his own. He used to sow a great deal of corn, and

when it was ripe, he would reap it, and carry it into his barns. When his little boy was old enough to run by his father's side, I daresay he often went with him into the fields, and asked a great many questions, and his father would answer him.

Sometimes the child would say, "Father, what is the name of that *tree*?" Or, "What kind of corn is that—is it *wheat* or *barley*?" Or, "What is the name of that *flower*?" And if he saw a *bird* flying about or sitting on a tree, he would say, "What kind of bird is that?" Children should learn to know about the trees, and the birds, and the flowers—and if they are good children, it is very pleasant to tell them what they ask.

Now one day they were reaping the corn. It was harvest time, and every body was very busy. His father was out in the field. I daresay all the servants were there, and there was nobody left in the house but the child and his mother. Perhaps she said, "Should you not like to go into the corn-field and see what your father is doing, and how they are getting in the corn?" Perhaps he had been wishing to go, and did not like to ask, or perhaps he had been asking to go for some time, and his

mother said, "You must wait till you have *done your lesson*." Does not your mother sometimes say that to *you*? I hope you mind what she says.

I daresay the little boy ran and skipped about when he was told that he might go! You like to go to see the *haymakers*—don't you? And if your father says, "Come, we will go into the *hay-field*!" don't you run and get your hat and dance about for joy? You like to smell how sweet the hay is—and to have a little fork and rake, to turn it about with. And how you like to tumble about on the haycocks, and to be covered all over with the hay! You don't forget what pleasure you had in the *hay-field*!

I daresay the Shunammite's child ran all the way to the cornfield—he was in such a hurry to get there. He must have run at once to his father, and said, "Father, I am come to help you. Shall you get all the corn in to-day?" And then, perhaps, he ran and spoke to some of the reapers. Perhaps his own nurse was there, helping to bind the sheaves, and he would go and give her a kiss, and then throw himself down upon the ground beside her, or sit upon

a sheaf of corn. I daresay all the reapers were glad to see him in the field, and said, "There comes our master's son!" and perhaps they all had a kind word to say to him.

How happy the child was! Poor little boy, he did not know how soon he would be sad! He was playing about, and the sun was very hot. Perhaps he had taken off his cap, and the sun beat on his head. He cried out, "*My head, my head!*" He could not run or play any more. He could only put his hand to his head, and call out in his pain.

They must all have come very quickly to see what was the matter with the child. Perhaps his father said, "Don't cry, my child; it will soon be better!" But no, the poor child did not get any better—he still cried out, "*My head, my head!*" So his father called a lad, and said, "Carry him to his mother!" So the lad took him in his arms, and carried him home. When the little boy ran so gladly out to the corn-field, he did not think that he would have to be carried home!

As the lad carried the child in his arms, I daresay he tried to comfort him, and said, "You will soon get well, you will soon get well!" But when the child went on crying,

the lad must have said to himself, "What will my mistress say? How sorry she will be to see her child so ill!"

The mother must have heard her child crying, as they came near the house. No doubt she ran out to see what was the matter. She took the child in her arms and carried him into the house. His head was so bad. Perhaps she laid him down in bed, but still he cried, and was worse than he was before. So she took him up again and kept him on her lap, and he leaned his head against his mother's bosom. He seemed easier there than anywhere else.

Perhaps his mother tried to give him something to ease the pain, but he could not take it. She said, "My child, I hope you will soon be better. God has sent you this sickness. And if He will, He can take it away. We must trust in God!" But the poor child was too ill to listen to her—he was too ill to speak. He could only say, "*My head, my head!*" At last he did not say that any more. He drooped his little head and died.

It was just twelve o'clock when the child died. Only think, he was well in the morning,

able to play and to run about—and he was dead at noon. He was not sick so long as *Abijah*. He was not in bed even for a day. How suddenly he died! Yes, and little children sometimes die suddenly still. We don't know how soon God may take any of us away.

And where was *Elisha*? He was not there. He was far away at *Carmel*. The Shunammite must have wished that he had been there. He would have prayed for the child, that God would let him live—and when the child was dead, he would have prayed with the Shunammite, and have done all he could to comfort her. But what did she do? Did she stay to weep? Did she go about the house, crying, "My child, my child! What shall I do without my child?" No, she did not weep—she did not say a word. She took her dead child, and went into the little chamber of the man of God, and laid the child on *Elisha's bed*, and shut the door. She said to herself, "I will go at once and tell *Elisha*."

So she sent to her husband in the corn field, and said, "Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again." And why do you think she laid her dead child on

Elisha's bed? And why did she wish to go to the Prophet so quickly? The child was dead. What could Elisha do? Ah, she thought that Elisha could pray to God, and that God might bring back the child's life again.

Did you ever read of the death of *Lazarus*? His sister *Martha* said to Jesus, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that *even now*, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, *He will give it Thee*." (John xi. 21, 22.) And so the Shunammite thought that God would hear the prayer of Elisha.

Yes, and I daresay Elisha had told her what *Elijah* did once—how he raised the widow's son to life again. Elijah took the child, and laid him upon his own bed, and he cried mightily unto the Lord, and said, "O Lord my God, I pray Thee let this child's soul come into him again." So the Lord heard the prayer of Elijah, and the child lived again. (1 Kings xvii.) Now, I daresay the Shunammite thought to herself, "If I lay my child on Elisha's bed, he will come, and pray for him, as Elijah did for the widow's son, and I shall have my dear child again."

The Shunammite did not tell her husband that the child was dead. She thought he would

be so sorry to hear it—and she must have said to herself, “Elisha may come and restore the child to life before my husband knows that he is dead.” Her husband did not know why she wished to go to Elisha, but he sent her a young man and one of the asses, that she might go at once.

So the Shunammite mounted the ass, and the young man went with her. Either he followed her on foot, to drive the ass forward, or else he was mounted on another beast, to ride along with her. She bid him go very fast. I daresay the young man said, “You will be tired; you must stop a little, and not go so fast.” But she said, “No, I must go on. There is no time to lose. We must go to the Prophet as fast as we can. Don't stop unless I bid you.” So the young man drove on the ass very quickly.

How glad the Shunammite must have been when they got near Mount Carmel! I daresay she said to the young man, “Is not that Mount Carmel? Oh yes, it is! We shall soon be there. I hope Elisha is at home. What shall we do if he is not there?”

The Shunammite used to go sometimes to see Elisha there on the Sabbath-day, and at the New Moon—for God had ordered the Israelites

to offer sacrifices at the New Moon, because God wished them to remember Him every month. He wished them to serve Him always; but he put them in mind every month at the New Moon. Elisha used to pray with the people, and preach to them, on the Sabbath-day, and at the New Moon; and the Shunammite used to go, that her husband and she might worship there.

Elisha *was* at home. He was looking out at his window—or else he may have been walking before the door; and his servant *Gehazi* was with him. So Elisha said, “I see a man and a woman far off. They are riding very fast, and they are coming this way. I think it is the Shunammite.” So when they came a little nearer, he saw that it was indeed the Shunammite.

Perhaps Gehazi said, “Why does she come here *to-day*? This is not a day for praying and preaching. It is not the Sabbath, nor the New Moon. What can she want!” But Elisha must have said, “There must be something the matter. Surely her husband is not well—or her child is sick—she is riding so fast!” So he said to Gehazi his servant, “Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her,

Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child?"

My dear child, see how Elisha spoke to his servant. He said, "Run now, *I pray thee!*" How kindly he spoke! We should always speak kindly to servants. If you have a servant to wait upon you, I hope you speak to her in a civil manner. When you ask her to do anything for you, do you say, "*If you please!*" And when she has done anything for you, do you always say, "*Thank you!*" How sad it is when children are rude to servants! I hope you are not so. If your servant leaves her place, and goes to another situation, what will she have to say of you, if you have been rude to her?

So Gehazi went to meet the Shunammite, and said, "*Is it well* with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with thy child?" And what do you think she said? She did not say, "The child is dead—it is not well!" But she said, "*All is well!*"

What do you think the Shunammite meant by saying, "*All is well!*" Was she glad, then, that the child was dead? Oh no, she was very sorry. What, then, did she mean? Perhaps

she meant that, though the child was dead, Elisha would raise it to life again, and then all would be well. But if Elisha did *not* raise the child to life, could she *still* say, "It is well!" What do you think, my child? Could she *then* say, "It is well!" I think she could.

The Psalmist said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (Ps. cxix. 71.)

When *David's* child died, he felt that it was well. He said, "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; but he cannot return to me." (2 Sam. xii. 23.)

Oh yes, the Shunammite might say, "It is well with me—it is well with my husband. God has taken away our dear child, that we may think more of God, and of heaven. Whatever God does is good. He cannot do anything wrong. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord!" Yes, my dear child, when mothers fear God and believe in Jesus Christ, though they are very sorry to lose their dear children, they know that God does all things well, and their sorrow is turned into joy.

But could she say, "It is *well* with the *child*"? Was it well for the child that he was *dead*? I

trust the Shunammite's child had shown that he feared God. Elisha must often have taught him from the Word of God. His father and mother must also have taken pains to teach him well. We must trust that God had given him *a new heart*—and then "It was well" for him that he was dead. It was well with *Abijah* when he died, because "there was found in him some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." We must hope that it was the same with the Shunammite's son.

The Shunammite said to Gehazi, "It is well!" She said no more to *him*. She did not want to speak to him, but to his master Elisha. So she rode on very fast till she came to Elisha on Mount Carmel. She threw herself off the ass, and fell down at his feet, and embraced them. I daresay she wept very much. Her heart was so sad—she could not speak a word. She kept hold of Elisha's feet, and said nothing.

When Gehazi saw how the Shunammite held his master's feet, and how she mourned and wept, he came near, and tried to take her away. He thought that she was troubling his master, and he bade her let him alone. But Elisha

said, "Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her, and the Lord hath hid it from *me*, and hath not told *me*."

Do you say, "How *could* Elisha have known what was the matter when she had not told him?" My child, do you remember how *the wife of Jeroboam* went to the *Prophet Ahijah*, when her child was sick? Did not Ahijah know that she was coming? And how did he know it? Because the Lord had told him.

And once, when the King of Israel had sent a man to take Elisha and kill him, the Lord God told Elisha of it; and before the man came to Elisha's door, he said, "See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? Look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" (2 Kings vi. 32.) But when the Shunammite came to Elisha, the Lord had not told him what was the matter; and so he said, "The Lord hath *hid* it from *me*. *He hath not told me.*"

And why do you think the Lord had not told Elisha? To show him that he could not know anything, unless the Lord made it known to him. If Elisha had always known what was

going to happen, he might have been conceited ; he might have forgotten that he could know nothing without the Lord. God does not like us to be proud or conceited. He likes us to be humble, and to know that we are poor, ignorant creatures.

My dear child, if you know how to read and to write, you must not be proud of it. You must not say, "That little child cannot read, and *I* can. Am I not better than he?" If little children have not kind friends to teach them, or to put them to school, should you not be sorry for them? Who gave *you* your father, and mother, and friends? Is it not God? Did you teach yourself? Oh, no, you could not do so. You are no better than the poor children, who cannot read and write. It is God who has made you different from them. You must thank God, and be humble. And what else must you do? Don't you know? Why, *pray* for those poor children, that they also may be taught.

The Shunammite still held Elisha by the feet. Still she wept, and sobbed, and spake not a word. At last she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not de-

ceive me?" She meant to say that her son had been born to her because Elisha had prayed God to give her a son. She had not asked him to pray to God that she might have a child—but Elisha had told her that she should have a son—and she had then said to him, "Are you sure that I shall have a son? Has God told you that I shall? Don't deceive me. Don't make me expect it, if it is not to come to pass."

So, now, the Shunammite put Elisha in mind of what she had said. And now she meant to say, "Why did you ask God to give me a son, if God was going to take him away? It would have been better not to have had a son, if I was to lose him after all. God ought not to have given me my dear child, if He did not mean him to grow up and be a comfort to me." And then I daresay she wept still more, and held the Prophet's feet faster than ever.

But was the Shunammite right to speak in this way? Oh, no, it was very wrong to do so. Does not God know what he ought to do? If a baby is born, and dies the next moment, is it not all right? Or if it dies when it is a month old, or a year old, is it not all right? It could not have been born unless God had sent it—

and it could not have died unless God had taken it away. And so when we hear of little children being dead, we must say, "It is all well; God has taken them away. Does not God know what is right to be done?"

When Elisha heard that the Shunammite's child was dead, he said to his servant Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way; if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again, and lay my staff upon the face of the child." (Ver. 29.)

What did he mean by saying "Gird up thy loins"? The men used to wear long robes, and very loose—longer and wider than women's dresses are now. When a man had to walk fast or to run, he would have fallen if he had not girded up his robe. So they wore straps or ropes round their waists, that they might draw their robe tight round them, when they were going to walk. So Elisha meant to say to Gehazi, "Make haste, and get ready to go out, for I want you to go quickly to Shunem where the child is dead."

It is well to be quick, when we are told to do so. Time is precious, and we should not be

longer in doing anything than we can help. Some children learn to dawdle, and then they are not ready when it is time to go out, and they keep others waiting for them. I don't like to hear a child called to come two, or three times, before he is ready. I hope *you* don't do so !

Elisha told Gehazi not to salute any man by the way. That means, not to speak to anybody that he met ; and if anyone spoke to him, he was not to take any notice of them. Why did Elisha say this ? Did he mean that Gehazi was to be uncivil ? Oh, no, he did not mean that. We must be polite and kind to everybody. I have seen some children that would not speak to anybody, they were so rude. If you meet them walking, and ask them how they do, they will not answer, and if you kiss your hand to them, they turn away their heads from you. This is not pleasant. Children should answer when they are spoken to, and be glad to hold out their hand when they meet their friends.

I hope you are always civil to the poor. When you meet a poor man or woman, you should be as polite to them as you are to the

rich—and you should never be rude to other children, who are not dressed so well as *you* are, or because their father has to work for his living. You must be kind and civil to all men.

But why did Elisha tell Gehazi not to speak to anyone by the way, nor to answer anyone that spoke to him? I think he meant that Gehazi was to *pray* as he went along, and to *think* of what he was about. Elisha had told him to take his staff, and lay it upon the face of the child, because Elisha thought that when he did so, perhaps the Lord would make the child live again. Now, Gehazi must have known this, and Elisha meant to say, “You are going on a very serious errand. You must think what you are about. As you walk along the road, you must pray much to God, that He would raise the child to life again. Don’t think of other things, but think of the Lord God.”

Was it not right that Elisha should tell Gehazi to take heed, and to watch and pray, and not to lift his eyes as he walked along?

And now, my child, is there not a word here for *you*? If you are at your lessons, and your little brother, or sister comes into the room, and talks to you, ought you not to say, “*I am at my lessons ; I cannot talk to you now.*” Or, if

you are reading the Bible and trying to think of it, and your brother or sister says, "Come and play," should you not say at once, "Hush ! don't you see what I am about? Pray, don't speak to me now. I will play with you by and by—but *I cannot do so now.*" And if you were kneeling down and praying, and anyone spoke to you, you would not answer at all. They would see what you were doing, and would go away.

Elisha thought that the Shunammite would have gone back with Gehazi. But she would not go ; she still kept fast hold of Elisha. She thought that no one else could raise her son to life. I daresay she said, "Thou must come also—I will not go without thee !" "What! will not Gehazi do?" "No," she said, "As the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So Elisha agreed to go with her, and while Gehazi went before they followed after.

Gehazi got to Shunem some time before the Shunammite, and Elisha. He went into the little chamber on the wall, and there he saw the dead body of the child lying on Elisha's bed. I daresay he had often seen the little

boy come running into the room to speak to him—but *now* he was cold and dead. So Gehazi took Elisha's staff, and laid it upon the face of the child. I daresay he thought that the child would open his eyes at once, and come to life again. But the body did not stir—there was no life in it. Perhaps Gehazi spoke, but it did not hear. Perhaps he shook it, but it did not feel. Perhaps he said, "Arise, and get up;" but it did not move—it lay still. Gehazi must have been much disappointed that he could not do it. How glad he would have been if the child had come to life, and he could have taken him by the hand to go and meet his mother!

Do you ask, my child, *why* Elisha bid Gehazi take his staff and lay it on the face of the child? Did Elisha think that that would bring the child to life again? I suppose he did. He thought that God might be pleased to do it in that way. But did he think that his staff could do it? That any one might say, "Elisha's staff did it. Nobody else's staff could do it, but Elisha's has done it." Oh, no, I don't think the Prophet thought this. He knew that God alone can do such things—and I hope, when he sent Gehazi with his staff in his hand, that

he prayed to God, if it were His will, that He would raise the child to life in that way.

So Gehazi went out to meet Elisha and the Shunammite. She must have asked Gehazi, and said, "Is the child alive again?" But he said, "No—the child is not awaked."

So when they came to the house, Elisha went into his little chamber; and the child was lying on his bed, with the staff laid on his face. The child was dead still. Then Elisha shut the door. He would not let either the Shunammite, or Gehazi come in. He wished to be alone with God, and with the body of the child. So Elisha kneeled down, and prayed that God would be pleased to raise the child to life again.

Have you ever read in the Acts of the Apostles how *Peter* went into the room where *Tabitha* was lying dead? He put them all out of the room, as Elisha did, and then he kneeled down, and prayed; and, turning him to the body, said, "Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up." (Acts ix. 40.)

So, when Elisha had prayed, he went to the bed and lay upon the child, and put his mouth

upon the child's mouth, and his eyes upon the child's eyes, and his hands upon the child's hands. When Elisha did this, the child was still stiff and cold. But by-and-by the child's body got warm. How glad Elisha must have been to feel it! He must have said, "The child is beginning to live again!"

Then he left the child, and walked up and down the room, and prayed to God all the time. Perhaps he went into the house and walked up and down there—but nobody would speak to Elisha then. The Shunammite would say, "I must not speak to him. He is praying to God; he is praying. He is wrestling with God. Do not speak to him—let him alone."

Then Elisha went again to the bed, and lay upon the child, as he did before. And still the child's flesh was warm. It had not got cold again. That was good, and made Elisha hope. By-and-by the child sneezed! Presently he sneezed again! "Will he sneeze any more? Is he really coming to life again?" Yes, he sneezed a third time—a fourth time—a fifth—a sixth—a seventh time! "Yes, surely the child is alive. Oh, yes, now he opens his eyes and looks about him!"

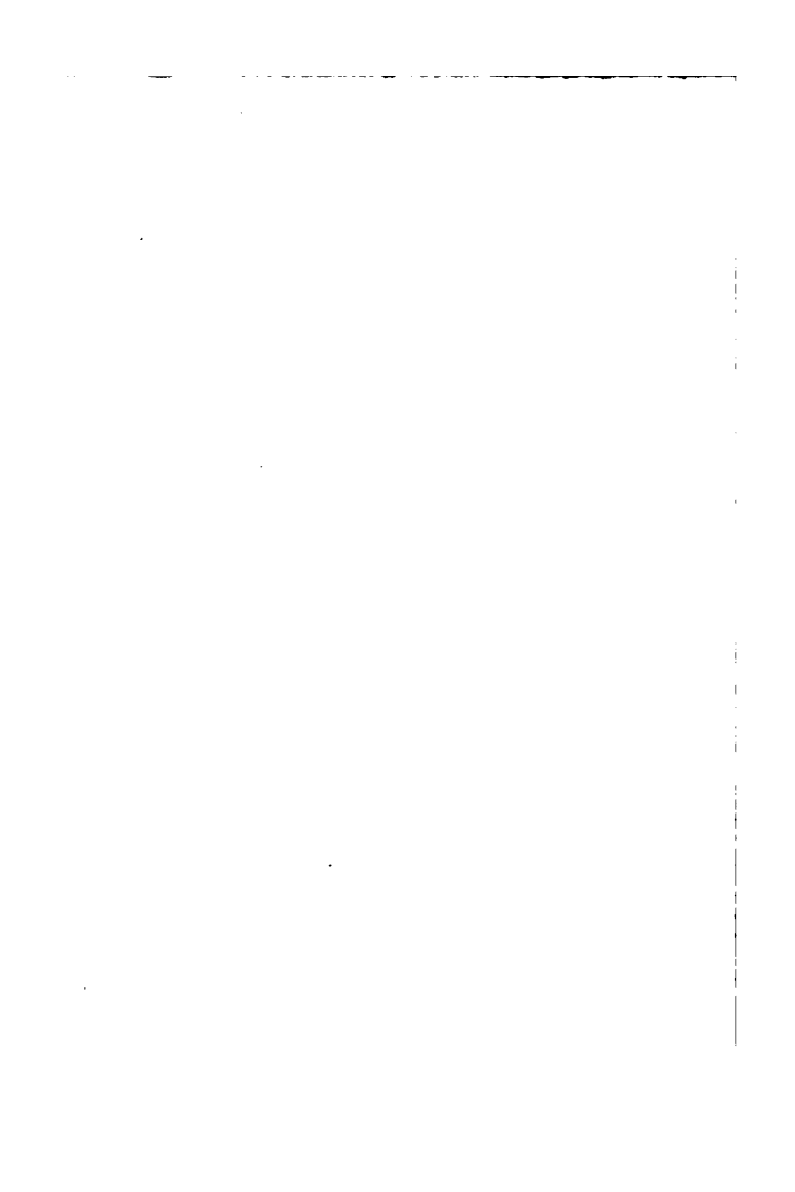
If any one had seen the child dead, they

would have said, "He will never open his eyes again!" How wonderful to see his eyes open once more! He could see, and feel, and hear, and speak! He was no longer dead—he was alive again! He no longer lay upon the bed. He got up—he walked—perhaps he leaped for joy.

The Shunammite was waiting in the house. How anxious she must have been to know whether her child would live again! Perhaps she prayed, and then she got up, and walked about, and then prayed again. But presently she heard Gehazi call her. Oh, how quickly she must have run to see what it was! She would say, "Oh, Gehazi, what is it? Is the child alive? Is he alive? May I come to the Prophet? May I come?" "Come and see!" Gehazi said, "Come and see! Elisha wants to speak to thee."

So the Shunammite went to the little chamber. "Is my child alive? Is my dear child alive?" said she to herself all the way. But when she stood at the door, and the door was opened, she saw her child alive once more.

Who can tell what the Shunammite felt when she saw her child alive again! When





AND ELISHA SAID, "TAKE UP THY SON."

(See p. 137.)

Elisha said to her, "Take up thy son!" she fell down at the Prophet's feet. Before, she had bathed his feet with tears of sorrow—now she bathed them with tears of joy. She must have thanked the Lord with all her heart, and praised His name that He had given power to Elisha to do such wonderful things. And then she took her child in her arms, and carried him into the house.

I wonder what was the first thing she did with her child. I hope she made him kneel down with her, and praise the Lord for his goodness to them both.

And what was the father of the child doing all this time? Was he still in the cornfield? Most likely he was. He had not heard that his child was dead—his wife had not sent word to him why she was going to the Prophet at Mount Carmel. Perhaps when he came home at night, he said, "How is the child's head? Is he better?" And then she told him that the child had been dead and was alive again! What a day of rejoicing it must have been in that house!

Should not you like to know what the child himself thought of it—whether he remembered

it all the days of his life—whether he feared God, and went to heaven when he died? But God has not told us this in His Word. I hope you believe in Jesus, and then you will go to heaven, and if the Shunammite's son is there, you will see him and know him. But, alas! many men and women, and many children too, are raised up from sickness, and from the gates of the grave, and then forget the God, who had mercy on them.

My dear child, the Shunammite's son was dead, and was alive again. It was like being born a second time. This is what must be done to your *soul*. Don't you know what Jesus said, "Except a man *be born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3.) You must pray to God to give you His Holy Spirit, that you may learn to know what this means.

Unless you have a *new heart*, your soul is dead, like the body of the Shunammite's son when he had died. God raised him to life again—and so may God give you life in your soul. I hope that some day you will know another text, "And you hath He *quickened* who were *dead*." (Eph. ii. 1.) This means, "You hath He *made alive*." I hope, also, that one day God

will say of you, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke xv. 24.)

My dear child, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,*" and so shall it be well with your soul!

THE CHILD JOASH.

THERE WAS a King of Judah named *Ahaziah*. He was killed by *Jehu*, King of Israel. He had several sons, one of whom was named *Joash*. The mother of *Ahaziah* was named *Athaliah*. She was a very wicked woman ; and when she heard that her son was dead, she said to herself, " I will be Queen, and reign over Judah." So she gave orders that all *Ahaziah's* children should be slain. She said, " None of them shall be king. I will be Queen—and they shall all be put to death."

Think how cruel that was ! She was their *grandmother*, and *yet* she wished to kill them all. Grandmothers love their grandchildren ; and children are glad when they go to see their grandmother, or when she comes to see *them*. But *Athaliah* was a wicked woman, and so she did not love her grandchildren, and ordered them all to be killed.

Now, King *Ahaziah* had a sister named

Jehoshabeath. That is a hard name—Je-hosh-a-beath. (2 Chron. xxii. 11.) She was *sister* to *Ahaziah*, and *daughter* to *Athaliah*—and *what relation* was she, then, to *Ahaziah's children*? She was their *Aunt*.

Joash was a baby—only one year old, when his father died. And when his aunt Jehoshabeath heard that Athaliah had ordered all the children to be killed, she took Joash in her arms and ran away, and hid him, so that he could not be found. They wanted to find him, that they might kill him, but nobody knew where he was. His nurse went with him too, and Jehoshabeath hid them in a bed-room. They searched the nursery all over, and they could not find Joash anywhere. They did not think of looking in the bed-room. If they had, they would have found him there—but God was pleased that Joash should not be killed, and so his life was spared.

How glad Jehoshabeath must have been when the men left the house, and could not find Joash! And the nurse too—how much she must have trembled lest the baby should be killed! But all the other children of Ahaziah were killed. And so Joash was the only one left. He had no brothers or sisters remaining.

If any one had said to him afterwards, "Have you any brothers or sisters?" he would say, "Oh no—I have none—they were all killed in one day." And if any one had said, "Do you *remember* them?" he would say, "Oh, no—I was only a baby then. I cannot remember one of them. I was too young to know that I had any brothers and sisters."

And so, there are some children *now*, who have no brothers or sisters to play with, or to go out with to take a walk. Perhaps they say, "I wish I had some brothers and sisters!" But, my dear child, God knows what is best for us all, and we must learn to be happy with what He gives us.

Joash was saved by his *Aunt*. Do you remember her name? *Jehoshabeath*. Perhaps *you* have an *Aunt*, who is very kind to you. Perhaps you have more than one. Some children have many Aunts, and they are often very fond of their little nieces, and nephews. How glad children are when they hear that their Aunt is coming to stay with them! They say, "How glad we shall be to see her! We shall have such nice walks together, and we will show her all our playthings, and we will do all we can to amuse her."

Yes, my dear child, and how much *Aunts* often do for the children! How kind they are to them! What a deal of trouble they take for them! When their mamma is sick, does not their Aunt often do everything for them—hear them say their lessons, and make their clothes, and take them out to walk? How much children ought to love their Aunts! Yes, and often their Aunts pray for them—that God would give them *a new heart* and make them *believe in Jesus*. That is the best of all. And should not children pray for their Aunts, that God would bless them?

Well, did *Joash* and his nurse remain in the bedchamber? Oh, no, if they had, they would have been found out. When *Athaliah* came to the house, she would have said, “What have you got in the bedchamber? Why don’t you let me go in?” And then she would have found that *Joash* was there, and she would have killed him.

Now, *Jehoshabeath* was *married*. And to *whom* was she married? To *Jehoiada*, the High Priest. He was a very good man, and lived in the Temple of the Lord. And *Jehoshabeath* must have said to her husband,

"Where can we hide the child, that he may not be killed?" So Jehoiada must have said, "Bring him here, and I will hide him in some room in the house of the Lord—and then no man shall be able to find him, or know where he is." So I daresay they waited till it was dark, and then Jehoshabeath took the child and his nurse, and they went to Jehoiada in the house of the Lord. How glad the nurse must have been to find that they were safe at last. I daresay she kissed the baby, and pressed him to her bosom, and said, "Thank God, we are safe!"

So *Joash* lived with his uncle *Jehoiada*, and his aunt *Jehoshabeath*, in the house of the Lord. I suppose it was some house, close to the Temple, where the High Priest and his family lived. Perhaps they had a *garden*, where *Joash* and his nurse might *walk*—for they could not go out to walk elsewhere, for fear they should be found out, and put to death.

You have heard of *another* little child, that lived with the *High Priest* in the *Lord's House*. You know whom I mean, don't you? Little *Samuel*—who was brought up with *Eli*. *Eli* was a very good man, and taught *Samuel* to fear the Lord. *Jehoiada* was as good a man as *Eli*, and he also took great pains to teach *Joash*. But

Eli could not give Samuel a new heart, but God gave it to him. Neither could Jehoiada give a new heart to Joash. Joash was very obedient to his uncle and aunt, and he was *thought* a very good child (2 Chron. xxiv. 2); but I fear that he had not received God's Holy Spirit to make him a new creature.

That wicked woman *Athaliah*, the grandmother of Joash, reigned in Jerusalem. She was called the *Queen*, and did everything that she pleased. She was very cruel, and I daresay the people were very ill-used by her. They must have been very sorry that she was Queen. Perhaps some of them said, "I wish the children of Ahaziah were not all dead, that we might have one of them to reign over us! Then we should not be so badly off as we are with this wicked woman Athaliah." They did not know that *Joash* was alive, and that his aunt Jehoshabeath had hid him.

Now Jehoiada and his wife Jehoshabeath knew that the people were unhappy because Athaliah reigned over them. They did not tell anyone that they had the child Joash in their house. I daresay they said to the people, "You must bear your trials as well as you can.

Pray to God to give you grace to do so. God can help you out of your troubles. Perhaps some day He will give you another king to reign over you." And Jehoiada must have said to his wife, "When the child Joash is old enough, then we will make him King."

Joash was only a year old when his father was killed, and when all his brothers and sisters were murdered. He lived *six years* with Jehoiada and Jehoshabeath. (2 Kings xi. 3 ; 2 Chron. xxii. 12.) He learnt his lessons, and played about, like other children. I daresay he did not know that his father was a king. Perhaps he called *Jehoiada*, "My father," and *Jehoshabeath*, "My mother," and thought that they were his parents. But when he was *seven years old*, a great change took place in the history of Joash.

Jehoiada knew that Joash *must* be *King* of Judah, because he was of the family of King *David*. (2 Chron. xxiii. 3.) I daresay Jehoiada had prayed much to the Lord to tell him *when* Joash should be made King. Perhaps he thought that when Joash was fifteen or eighteen years old it would be time enough for him to be King. But one day, when Joash was just seven years old, Jehoiada may have been

praying to the Lord, and the Lord said, "Now is the time to make Joash King."

Jehoiada did not say, "Joash is too young to be King; I cannot do it." But he did as, I believe, God had told him. So perhaps Jehoiada called Joash to him, and said, "My dear child, do you know that you are a King? Your father was a King. When you were a baby, he was killed, and all your brothers and sisters were murdered by your grandmother Athaliah. She is Queen now, but she must not be so any longer. You are the King of Judah, and you must sit on your father's throne."

What a surprise it must have been to the child Joash, to hear that he was a King! I wonder what he said, and what he thought. Only think how he had been shut up in the house of the Lord! He had never been in the city of Jerusalem—he had been *hid*, as a child that nobody was to see. And now he was to be a *King* upon his *throne*! To have carriages, and fine houses, and servants! He was to be the greatest person in the land—all men were to obey him!

What do you think Joash did when he heard all this? Perhaps he danced for joy. Or

perhaps he was afraid, and began to cry. Perhaps he said, "How can I be a King? O Jehoiada, what can I do?" But Jehoiada must have spoken kindly to the child, and said, "Fear not, my child—God will give thee strength. He will teach thee what to do. Your aunt Jehoshabeath and I are with you. Are we not as your father and mother? We shall still love you, and you will love *us*. Though you live in a palace, we shall come and see you; you will still be as a son to your aunt and me."

So Jehoiada sent for some of the great men of Judah (2 Kings xi. 4; 2 Chron. xxiii. 1), and said to them,

"Do you wish Athaliah, that wicked woman, to reign over you?"

"Oh no!" said they, "but what can we do? All the King's sons were slain. Art *thou* going to be king over us?"

"No," said Jehoiada, "I am not your king. I do not wish to be your king. I cannot be your king; I am not of the family of David."

"Who then can be king?" said they.

"What if I can show you one of the King's sons!" said Jehoiada—"What if one of *them* is still alive? Shall not *he* reign over you?"

"How can that be?" said they.

"Come and see!" said Jehoiada.

So he took them into the house of the Lord, and showed them the child Joash. What a surprise it must have been to them! They could hardly believe it for joy. And then Jehoiada must have told them how Jehoshabeath had taken the child, and his nurse, and hid them in the bedchamber, and how he had been ever since in the house of the Lord. And then I daresay they threw themselves at his feet, and kissed his hand, and said, "Thou shalt be King over us! The throne belongs to thee, O Joash. We will fight for thee. Thou shalt be our King!"

So when they had seen the child Joash, Jehoiada took them out, and said, "Now you must go into all the land. You must find out the chief men of Judah. You must say to them quietly, 'One of the King's sons is living. His name is Joash. He is with Jehoiada at Jerusalem. You must come up with some of your best soldiers, and fight for your King. Athaliah shall no longer be Queen over us. Joash must be King.'"

So the men went out from Jehoiada, and did as he bade them. They went into all the land,

and told the chief men that *Joash* was alive—and that *he* was their *king*. So a great many priests and Levites went up to Jerusalem, and a great many soldiers were there too. But they did not tell all the people why they were there, nor what they were going to do, for fear Athaliah should hear of it before the time.

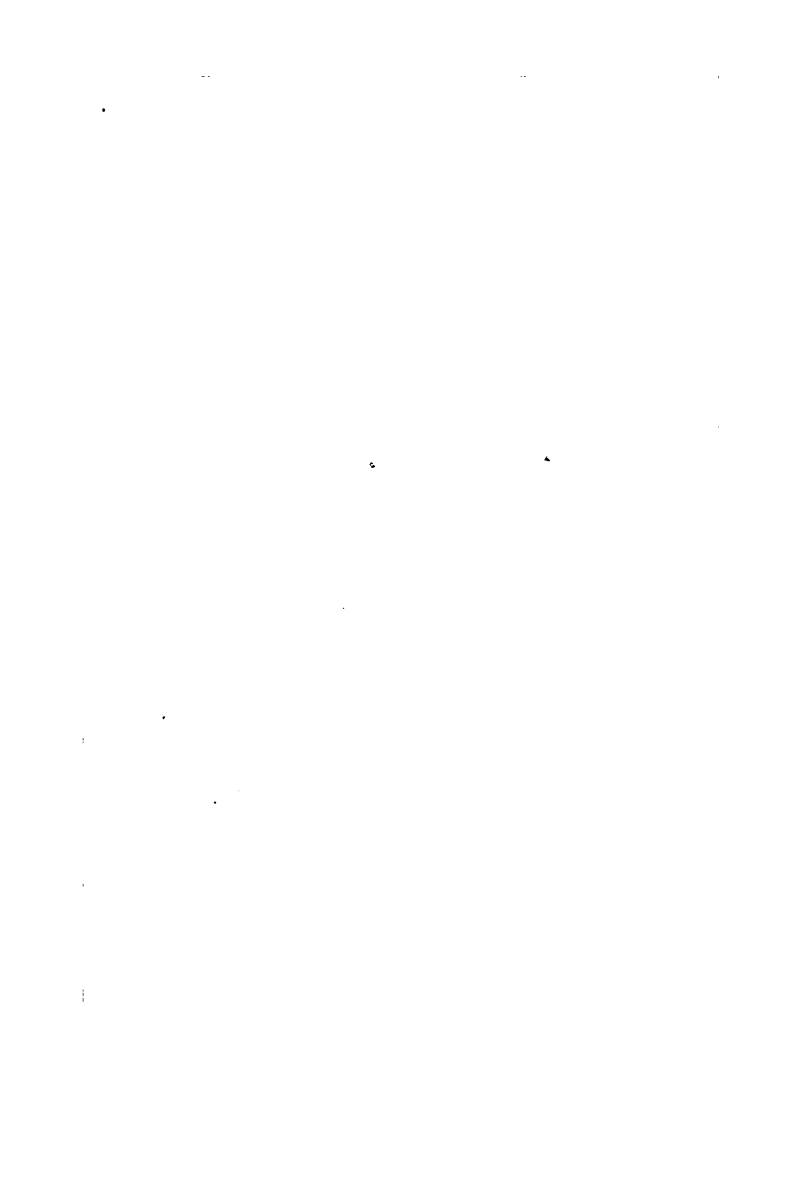
So, when everything was ready, Jehoiada brought all the priests and Levites into the temple; and all the soldiers stood round about the temple with their swords and spears in their hands, all ready to fight for Joash. I daresay it was a fine day, and their swords and spears glittered in the sun—and perhaps many people wondered what they were all going to do.

So, when they were all assembled in the Temple, Jehoiada came in, leading Joash by the hand, and said, "*Behold your king!*" Then he took him up to a pillar of the Temple, and put a crown upon his head. Then they poured oil upon his head. They showed him the law of Moses, the Holy Scriptures; and told him that he must keep it all the days of his life. Joash then took the law of God in his hand, and said that he would keep it—for God had



"JOASH IS KING."

(See p. 150.)



commanded that no man should be king, unless he swore to do so. Also, the king was to *write* out a copy of the law with his own hand, in a book, and keep it with him as long as he lived, that he might read it, and learn to do it. (Deut. xvii. 16.)

So when all this was done, they clapped their hands, and said, "*God save the King!*" You have often heard them sing and play, "God save the Queen!" When we have a king, it is, "God save the *King!*" But now that we have Queen Victoria on the throne, it is, "God save the *Queen!*" People often sing it, and play it, without thinking what they are saying. It means that God would be pleased to protect our Queen, and not only to save her body, but save her soul. That is what we ought to pray God to do for her—and that is what they prayed God to do for King Joash.

Should you not have liked to see Joash? A little child *only seven years old* with a crown upon his head, and wearing Royal robes—standing by the pillar in the house of the Lord! And all the people clapping their hands, and shouting as loud as they could, "God save the King!"

When the people in the city heard what was being done in the Temple, they ran with haste to see it. One told another, saying, "*Joash is alive! Joash is King!*" And so all Jerusalem was in an uproar. They ran—they called—they shouted with joy.

Now, Athaliah the Queen heard the noise—she saw the people running—she could not tell what was the matter. She also hastened to the Temple; she must soon have heard them shouting, "God save King *Joash!*" Her wicked heart must have trembled. And when she came into the Temple, there she saw all the priests, and the soldiers, and a great crowd of people. And when she looked there she saw the King. Yes, *the child Joash* was really *king*.

He had the crown on his head, and Athaliah saw it. He had on the Royal robes, and Athaliah saw that too. He "stood at his pillar at the entering in," just as they went into the Temple. The princes and the trumpeters stood beside him. All the people rejoiced; the trumpeters sounded their trumpets; the musicians played on their musical instruments—while they cried again and again, "God save the King!"

When Athaliah saw Joash with his crown on his head, and heard the people shouting, she *rent her clothes*. In those days when anybody was in great grief, or if they were much shocked to hear anything that was said, they used to *rend*, that means to *tear*, their clothes.

When Jacob saw *Joseph's* coat of many colours, dipped in blood, he thought that Joseph was dead, and he *rent his clothes*. (Gen. xxxvii. 34.)

When *David* heard that *Saul* and *Jonathan* were dead, he too *rent his clothes*. (2 Sam. i. 11.)

When the *High Priest* heard *Jesus* say that He was the Son of God, he *rent his clothes*. (Matt. xxvi. 65.)

And so when Athaliah saw that the people wished to make Joash their King, she knew that she could be no longer Queen. She was very sorry, and very angry too, and so she *rent her clothes*, and cried out, "*Treason, treason!*"

Do you know what "treason" means? It means anything that people do against a king, or a queen. Did you ever read how *Shimei* cursed *King David*, and called him names, and threw dust and stones at him? (2 Sam. xxvi. 5—13.) That was *treason*. If the people were to say, "We will not have *Queen Victoria* to reign over us," that would be *treason*. And so

when Athaliah saw that they would not let her be Queen any more, she called out, "*Treason, treason!*" And yet it was not treason *then*, for Athaliah was not their *lawful* Queen—she had no right to be upon the throne. But Athaliah hoped that some of the people would fight for her—that they would say, "Athaliah shall be our Queen! Joash shall not be King!" But there was nobody that said, "God save Queen Athaliah!"

Jehoiada the High Priest stood beside the young King Joash, and when he saw Athaliah come into the Temple, and heard her cry, "Treason, treason!" he told the soldiers to take her out and kill her. So they laid hold on Athaliah, and took her out; and then they killed her with their swords.

How soon Athaliah was slain! When she rose that morning, she was a Queen—before night she was Queen no longer—she was *dead*. When *Joash* rose that morning, he was only the child Joash. Before night he had a crown on his head, and all the people cried, "God save King Joash!"

And so Athaliah was slain. Was it *right* to kill Athaliah? Oh yes, it was. God has said,

"*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made he man.*" (Gen. ix. 6.) That is why murderers are always hanged. We do not now hear of men being hanged in England for *stealing*. They are put in *prison* for *that*. But if a man *kills* anybody, and *meant* to do so, that is *murder*, and he is put to *death*. And so because Athaliah had murdered all the brothers, and sisters, of Joash, she was a murderer, and it was quite right that she should be killed.

Was it not a sad thing that a woman should die in so much wickedness, without repenting of her sins, and without the fear of God in her heart! And so, when we hear now of men that have committed murder, and that they are going to be hanged, we ought to pray that God would give them *a new heart*—that they might know what sinners they are, and that they might *believe in Jesus*, and have *their sins forgiven*. It is a sad thing to commit murder, but "*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*"

There were two men crucified with Jesus. They were not murderers, but they were thieves. There you read of one of them, called the *Penitent Thief*—how he *believed in*

Jesus, and was saved? He said, "*Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*" And Jesus said to him, "*Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*" (Luke xxiii. 42, 43.) And so when you hear of men that are going to be hanged for murder, you must say, "It is right that they should be put to death, because God has said so,"—but you ought to pray for their souls, that they may be saved.

And now *Joash* was *King*. A child of *seven years old* was *King*! All the people served him, and obeyed him, as if he had been a *man*, because he was the son of their last king; and they knew that it was God's will that he should rule over them. And so he lived in the *palace*—and he had all his officers about him. When he rode out in his carriage, the people said, "*The King is coming!*" And then, I daresay, they uncovered their heads, and cried, "*God save the King!*" *Joash* must have felt it very strange at first to think that he was king, and that all the people in the land belonged to him!

But *Joash* was still a *child*. He was a *King*, and wore a crown on his head—but still he

was a *little boy*, only seven years old. Joash still had to learn lessons. He was a child, and did not know much, and so we hear of little princes and princesses learning their lessons like other children. They have tutors, and governesses to teach them, or they would not know what to do when they are Kings and Queens. They have their fathers and mothers too—and they must love, and obey them, as other children do.

Now Joash had no father or mother to teach him. But he had a kind friend, who was quite a father to him. You know *whom* I mean—his uncle *Jehoiada*, the High Priest. If his aunt Jehoshabeath was still alive, she too must have helped him still. They had taught him ever since he was a baby, and they did so still. Jehoiada told Joash every thing that he was to do—and when Joash did not know any thing, he would go to Jehoiada and ask him.

The people knew that Joash was a child, and that Jehoiada was a wise and a good man, and so they allowed Jehoiada to rule over them till Joash came to be a man. Joash was King, and Jehoiada was his Governor, to do every thing for him. All the people feared, and loved Jehoiada as if he had been king.

Jehoiada taught Joash how to be a king. He also told him how to serve God. He would say to him, "My child, you are a *king* and rule over men—but *God is King of kings*, and rules over *you*. You are a King, and you have every thing that you can wish, but remember that one day you must *die*, and therefore you need to have treasure in heaven. My child, think how God preserved you when your brothers and sisters were all killed! God has put down that wicked woman Athaliah, and has made you king over his people! Is it not that you may serve God, and flee from all false gods? Oh, my son, God sees you. Though you are a king, God's eye is upon you. *Take heed, then, what you say, and what you do!*"

Often would Jehoiada say such things to Joash. Often must he have read the Scriptures, and prayed with him, and told him to walk in the fear of the Lord. Now Joash was very glad to hear Jehoiada speak to him. He did every thing that Jehoiada said. He did nothing without consulting him. At last Joash became a man—he was no longer a child—but still he loved Jehoiada, and asked his advice in every thing—and whatever Jehoiada said, that he did.

Athaliah and her sons had broken down some parts of the house of God, and had taken away some of the vessels for the house of their false god Baal. But Joash caused the Temple to be repaired, and all the vessels to be restored. He honoured God and His house before all the people.

Jehoiada, the High Priest, lived to be a very old man—he was a hundred and thirty years old when he died. He lived a long time after Joash became king. As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash did the thing that was right. He worshipped God in His temple, and all the people did so too—but neither Joash nor the people did so, I fear, with a true heart. For when Jehoiada was dead, Joash turned away from the Lord. Both he and his people “left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols.” (2 Chron. xxiv. 18.)

I daresay there were many good men and women, that were sorry for it. Perhaps they said, “Joash would not have done this, if Jehoiada were still alive!” If Jehoshabeath was still living, perhaps she said, “O Joash, is it come to this! Did I save you from being murdered, that you should do this wicked

thing? What would your uncle Jehoiada have said to this!"

God sent Prophets to speak to Joash, but he did not mind them. He went on still in his sins. Neither Joash nor the people did what the Prophets bade them. Now Jehoiada had a son named *Zechariah*. He was High Priest when his father was dead. He was a good man, and feared God. He was sorry to see what Joash and the people had done. The Spirit of God came upon *Zechariah*, and he spoke boldly to Joash, and to the people. I daresay he said to Joash, "Did the Lord spare your life when you were an infant—did He make you a king when you were a child—has He given you the throne of David—that you should turn away from God, and *worship idols?*" But neither Joash nor the people minded what he said.

Joash was very angry with Zechariah because he told him the truth. Are not *you* sometimes angry when you are told your faults? Children sometimes say very naughty things, when any body tells them that they have done wrong. But that is not right. We ought rather to thank any body that tells us our faults. But Joash was very angry. I am almost afraid to say what Joash did. Did not *Cain* rise up

against his brother *Abel*, and kill him? And so *Joash* rose up against *Zechariah*. He did not kill him with his own hand, but he ordered the people to stone him with stones that he should die.

Yes, *Zechariah* was *Joash*'s cousin, the son of his uncle *Jehoiada*—he was the High Priest of God—he was a very good man—and *yet* *Joash* ordered them to *murder* him. So they came upon *Zechariah*, when he was in the house of the Lord, and threw great stones at him, *till he died!*

Have you not read of some one *else* that was stoned to death? I mean *Stephen*. Is it not written in the seventh chapter of the Acts? "They *stoned Stephen*, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." When *Stephen* died, he cried with a loud voice, "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!*" But *what* did *Zechariah* say, before he died? He said, "*Lord, look upon it, and requite it!*" (Ver. 22.) That meant, "O God, punish them for what they have done." *Zechariah* knew that God would punish *Joash* and his people for that great wickedness, and therefore he said, "*Lord, look upon it, and requite it!*"

God heard *Elisha* when he *cursed the children* that mocked him. God sent two she-bears out of the wood, that killed forty-two of the children. And *God heard Zechariah* when he said, "Lord, look upon it, and requite it!" For it came to pass that, at the end of the year, the King of Syria came and fought against Jerusalem, and killed very many of the princes and of the people. King Joash, too, fell sick with very sore diseases, and at last two of his servants rose up against him and *murdered* him. *What an end for Joash!*

My dear child, think of Joash! When his brothers and sisters were killed, he was saved. Who would have thought that he would be *murdered at last*? Think of him as a little child hid in the house with Jehoiada, and his aunt Jehoshabeath—think of him, when he stood in the Temple, and all the people cried, "God save the King!" Think how well he began to reign—how well he behaved all the days of Jehoiada—and yet, at last he worshipped idols—at last he was a murderer—at last he himself was *murdered*! Oh, what a history is that of King *Joash*!

My dear child, does not this teach us what need we have of a *new heart*? If Joash had

had a new heart, he would not have done all that he did. He *seemed* to be a good child—he did what he was told—he went to the house of God and read God's holy Word. When he became a man, he *seemed* to be a good man and a good king—but *he had not a new heart*.

Oh, how sad not to have a new heart! How sad *not to believe in Jesus Christ!* Oh, my dear child, may God give you *His Holy Spirit!* May you not only be a good child, to do as you are told—but may you be *born again*, and be *a child of God*—and if you grow up to be a man or woman, may you show that you are *a true Christian!* And at last when you die, may you go to heaven, because you have believed in God's dear Son, Jesus Christ! May God do this for you, for His name's sake!

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